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Dated 25 July 2003

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Granta Park,
Abington,
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CB1 6GS,
United Kingdom

Incorporated in the United Kingdom,

[ADP No. 08433971001]

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2. Patent application number *(The Patent Office will fill in this part)* — 0230202.4 — 27 DEC 2002

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant *(underline all surnames)*

Domantis Limited
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Patents ADP number *(if you know it)* 08633971001

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation — United Kingdom

SECTION 30 (1) (PCT) APPLICATION FILED

4. Title of the invention — Ligand

5. Name of your agent *(if you have one)* — D Young & Co

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent *(including the postcode)*

21 New Fetter Lane
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Patents ADP number *(if you know it)* — 59006

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Signature D Young & Co Date 27 December 2002

D Young & Co (Agents for the Applicants)

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom — Antonio Maschio — 023 8071 9500

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Ligand

The present invention relates to dual specific ligands. In particular, the invention provides a method for the preparation of dual-specific ligands comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain binding to a first antigen or epitope, and a second immunoglobulin single variable domain binding to a second antigen or epitope. More particularly, the invention relates to dual-specific ligands wherein binding to at least one of the first and second antigens or epitopes acts to increase the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*. Open and closed conformation ligands comprising more than one binding specificity are described.

Introduction

The antigen binding domain of an antibody comprises two separate regions: a heavy chain variable domain (V_H) and a light chain variable domain (V_L: which can be either V_K or $V\lambda$). The antigen binding site itself is formed by six polypeptide loops: three from V_H domain (H1, H2 and H3) and three from V_L domain (L1, L2 and L3). A diverse primary repertoire of V genes that encode the V_H and V_L domains is produced by the combinatorial rearrangement of gene segments. The V_H gene is produced by the recombination of three gene segments, V_H, D and J_H. In humans, there are approximately 51 functional V_H segments (Cook and Tomlinson (1995) *Immunol Today*, **16**: 237), 25 functional D segments (Corbett *et al.* (1997) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **268**: 69) and 6 functional J_H segments (Ravetch *et al.* (1981) *Cell*, **27**: 583), depending on the haplotype. The V_H segment encodes the region of the polypeptide chain which forms the first and second antigen binding loops of the V_H domain (H1 and H2), whilst the V_H, D and J_H segments combine to form the third antigen binding loop of the V_H domain (H3). The V_L gene is produced by the recombination of only two gene segments, V_L and J_L. In humans, there are approximately 40 functional V_K segments (Schäble and Zachau (1993) *Biol. Chem. Hoppe-Seyler*, **374**: 1001), 31 functional $V\lambda$ segments (Williams *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **264**: 220; Kawasaki *et al.* (1997) *Genome Res.*, **7**: 250), 5 functional J_K segments (Hieter *et al.* (1982) *J. Biol. Chem.*, **257**: 1516) and 4 functional $J\lambda$ segments (Vasicek

and Leder (1990) *J. Exp. Med.*, **172**: 609), depending on the haplotype. The V_L segment encodes the region of the polypeptide chain which forms the first and second antigen binding loops of the V_L domain (L1 and L2), whilst the V_L and J_L segments combine to form the third antigen binding loop of the V_L domain (L3). Antibodies selected from this primary repertoire are believed to be sufficiently diverse to bind almost all antigens with at least moderate affinity. High affinity antibodies are produced by "affinity maturation" of the rearranged genes, in which point mutations are generated and selected by the immune system on the basis of improved binding.

Analysis of the structures and sequences of antibodies has shown that five of the six antigen binding loops (H1, H2, L1, L2, L3) possess a limited number of main-chain conformations or canonical structures (Chothia and Lesk (1987) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **196**: 901; Chothia *et al.* (1989) *Nature*, **342**: 877). The main-chain conformations are determined by (i) the length of the antigen binding loop, and (ii) particular residues, or types of residue, at certain key position in the antigen binding loop and the antibody framework. Analysis of the loop lengths and key residues has enabled us to the predict the main-chain conformations of H1, H2, L1, L2 and L3 encoded by the majority of human antibody sequences (Chothia *et al.* (1992) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **227**: 799; Tomlinson *et al.* (1995) *EMBO J.*, **14**: 4628; Williams *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **264**: 220). Although the H3 region is much more diverse in terms of sequence, length and structure (due to the use of D segments), it also forms a limited number of main-chain conformations for short loop lengths which depend on the length and the presence of particular residues, or types of residue, at key positions in the loop and the antibody framework (Martin *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **263**: 800; Shirai *et al.* (1996) *FEBS Letters*, **399**: 1.

Bispecific antibodies comprising complementary pairs of V_H and V_L regions are known in the art. These bispecific antibodies must comprise two pairs of V_H and V_Ls, each V_H/V_L pair binding to a single antigen or epitope. Methods described involve hybrid hybridomas (Milstein & Cuello AC, Nature 305:537-40), minibodies (Hu *et al.*, (1996) Cancer Res 56:3055-3061;), diabodies (Holliger *et al.*, (1993) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 90, 6444-6448; WO 94/13804), chelating recombinant antibodies (CRAbs; (Neri *et al.*, (1995) J. Mol. Biol. 246, 367-373), biscFv (e.g. Atwell *et al.*, (1996) Mol. Immunol. 33, 1301-1312), "knobs in holes" stabilised antibodies (Carter *et al.*, (1997) Protein Sci. 6, 781-

788). In each case each antibody species comprises two antigen-binding sites, each fashioned by a complementary pair of V_H and V_L domains. Each antibody is thereby able to bind to two different antigens or epitopes at the same time, with the binding to EACH antigen or epitope mediated by a V_H and its complementary V_L domain. Each of these techniques presents its particular disadvantages; for instance in the case of hybrid hybridomas, inactive V_H/V_L pairs can greatly reduce the fraction of bispecific IgG. Furthermore, most bispecific approaches rely on the association of the different V_H/V_L pairs or the association of V_H and V_L chains to recreate the two different V_H/V_L binding sites. It is therefore impossible to control the ratio of binding sites to each antigen or epitope in the assembled molecule and thus many of the assembled molecules will bind to one antigen or epitope but not the other. In some cases it has been possible to engineer the heavy or light chains at the sub-unit interfaces (Carter *et al.*, 1997) in order to improve the number of molecules which have binding sites to both antigens or epitopes but this never results in all molecules having binding to both antigens or epitopes.

There is some evidence that two different antibody binding specificities might be incorporated into the same binding site, but these generally represent two or more specificities that correspond to structurally related antigens or epitopes or to antibodies that are broadly cross-reactive.. For example, cross-reactive antibodies have been described, usually where the two antigens are related in sequence and structure, such as hen egg white lysozyme and turkey lysozyme (McCafferty et al., WO 92/01047) or to free hapten and to hapten conjugated to carrier (Griffiths AD et al. *EMBO J* 1994 13:14 3245-60). In a further example, WO 02/02773 (Abbott Laboratories) describes antibody molecules with "dual specificity". The antibody molecules referred to are antibodies raised or selected against multiple antigens, such that their specificity spans more than a single antigen. Each complementary V_H/V_L pair in the antibodies of WO 02/02773 specifies a single binding specificity for two or more structurally related antigens; the V_H and V_L domains in such complementary pairs do not each possess a separate specificity. The antibodies thus have a broad single specificity which encompasses two antigens, which are structurally related. Furthermore natural autoantibodies have been described that are polyreactive (Casali & Notkins, Ann. Rev. Immunol. 7, 515-531), reacting with at least two (usually more) different antigens or epitopes that are not structurally related. It

has also been shown that selections of random peptide repertoires using phage display technology on a monoclonal antibody will identify a range of peptide sequences that fit the antigen binding site. Some of the sequences are highly related, fitting a consensus sequence, whereas others are very different and have been termed mimotopes (Lane & Stephen, Current Opinion in Immunology, 1993, 5, 268-271). It is therefore clear that a natural four-chain antibody, comprising associated and complementary V_H and V_L domains, has the potential to bind to many different antigens from a large universe of known antigens. It is less clear how to create a binding site to two given antigens in the same antibody, particularly those which are not necessarily structurally related.

Protein engineering methods have been suggested that may have a bearing on this. For example it has also been proposed that a catalytic antibody could be created with a binding activity to a metal ion through one variable domain, and to a hapten (substrate) through contacts with the metal ion and a complementary variable domain (Barbas et al., 1993 Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci USA 90, 6385-6389). However in this case, the binding and catalysis of the substrate (first antigen) is proposed to require the binding of the metal ion (second antigen). Thus the binding to the V_H/V_L pairing relates to a single but multi-component antigen.

Methods have been described for the creation of bispecific antibodies from camel antibody heavy chain single domains in which binding contacts for one antigen are created in one variable domain, and for a second antigen in a second variable domain. However the variable domains were not complementary. Thus a first heavy chain variable domain is selected against a first antigen, and a second heavy chain variable domain against a second antigen, and then both domains are linked together on the same chain to give a bispecific antibody fragment (Conrath et al., J. Biol. Chem. 270, 27589-27594). However the camel heavy chain single domains are unusual in that they are derived from natural camel antibodies which have no light chains, and indeed the heavy chain single domains are unable to associate with camel light chains to form complementary V_H and V_L pairs.

Single heavy chain variable domains have also been described, derived from natural antibodies which are normally associated with light chains (from monoclonal antibodies

or from repertoires of domains EP-A-0368684). These heavy chain variable domains have been shown to interact specifically with one or more related antigens but have not been combined with other heavy or light chain variable domains to create a ligand with a specificity for two or more different antigens . Furthermore, these single domains have been shown to have a very short *in vivo* half-life. Therefore such domains are of limited therapeutic value.

It has been suggested to make bispecific antibody fragments by linking heavy chain variable domains of different specificity together (as described above). The disadvantage with this approach is that isolated antibody variable domains may have a hydrophobic interface that normally makes interactions with the light chain and is exposed to solvent and may be "sticky'' allowing the single domain to bind to hydrophobic surfaces. Furthermore, in the absence of a partner light chain the combination of two or more different heavy chain variable domains and their association, possibly via their hydrophobic interfaces, may prevent them from binding to one in not both of the ligands they are able to bind in isolation. Moreover, in this case the heavy chain variable domains would not be associated with complementary light chain variable domains and thus may be less stable and readily unfold (Worn & Pluckthun, 1998 Biochemistry 37, 13120-7).

Summary of the invention

The inventors have described, in their copending unpublished international patent application PCT/GB 02/003014 as well as copending UK patent application entitled "Fc Fusion" filed on even date herewith, dual specific immunoglobulin ligands which comprise immunoglobulin single variable domains which each have different specificities. The domains may act in competition with each other or independently to bind antigens or epitopes on target molecules.

In a first configuration, the present invention provides a further improvement in dual specific ligands as developed by the present inventors, in which one specificity of the ligand is directed towards a protein or polypeptide present *in vivo* in an organism which can act to increase the half-life of the ligand by binding to it.

Accordingly, in a first aspect, there is provided a dual-specific ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain having a binding specificity to a first antigen or epitope and a second complementary immunoglobulin single variable domain having a binding activity to a second antigen or epitope, wherein one or both of said antigens or epitopes acts to increase the half-life of the ligand *in vivo* and wherein said first and second domains lack mutually complementary domains which share the same specificity, provided that neither of the first or second variable domains binds to human serum albumin (HSA).

Antigens or epitopes which increase the half-life of a ligand as described herein are advantageously present on proteins or polypeptides found in an organism *in vivo*. Examples, include extracellular matrix proteins, blood proteins, and proteins present in various tissues in the organism. The proteins act to reduce or prevent the rate of ligand clearance from the blood, for example by acting as bulking agents, or by anchoring the ligand to a desired site of action.

Increased half-life is useful in *in vivo* applications of immunoglobulins, especially antibodies and most especially antibody fragments of small size. Such fragments (Fvs, Fabs, scFvs, dAbs) suffer from rapid clearance from the body; thus, whilst they are able to reach most parts of the body rapidly, and are quick to produce and easier to handle, their *in vivo* applications have been limited by their only brief persistence *in vivo*. The invention solves this problem by providing increased half-life of the ligands *in vivo* and consequently longer persistence times in the body of the functional activity of the ligand.

Methods for pharmacokinetic analysis and determination of ligand half-life will be familiar to those skilled in the art. Details may be found in *Kenneth, A et al:* Chemical Stability of Pharmaceuticals: A Handbook for Pharmacists and in *Peters et al,* Pharmacokinetc analysis: A Practical Approach (1996). Reference is also made to "Pharmacokinetics", M Gibaldi & D Perron, published by Marcel Dekker, 2nd Rev. ex edition (1982), which describes pharmacokinetic parameters such as t alpha and t beta half lives and area under the curve (AUC).

Half lives (t½ alpha and t½ beta) and AUC can be determined from a curve of serum concentration of ligand against time. The WinNonlin analysis package (available from Pharsight Corp., Mountain View, CA94040, USA) can be used, for example, to model the curve. In a first phase (the alpha phase) the ligand is undergoing mainly distribution in the patient, with some elimination. A second phase (beta phase) is the terminal phase when the ligand has been distributed and the serum concentration is decreasing as the ligand is cleared from the patient. The t alpha half life is the half life of the first phase and the t beta half life is the half life of the second phase. Thus, advantageously, the present invention provides a ligand or a composition comprising a ligand according to the invention having a tα half–life in the range of 15 minutes or more. In one embodiment, the lower end of the range is 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours, 4 hours, 5 hours, 6 hours, 7 hours, 10 hours, 11 hours or 12 hours. In addition, or alternatively, ligand or composition according to the invention will have a tα half life in the range of up to and including 12 hours. In one embodiment, the upper end of the range is 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6 or 5 hours. An example of a suitable range is 1 to 6 hours, 2 to 5 hours or 3 to 4 hours.

Advantageously, the present invention provides a ligand or a composition comprising a ligand according to the invention having a tβ half–life in the range of 2.5 hours or more. In one embodiment, the lower end of the range is 3 hours, 4 hours, 5 hours, 6 hours, 7 hours, 10 hours , 11 hours, or 12 hours. In addition, or alternatively, a ligand group or composition according to the invention has a tβ half–life in the range of up to and including 21 days. In one embodiment, the upper end of the range is 12 hours, 24 hours, 2 days, 3 days, 5 days, 10 days, 15 days or 20 days. Advantageously a ligand or composition according to the invention will have a tβ half life in the range 12 to 60 hours. In a further embodiment, it will be in the range 12 to 48 hours. In a further embodiment still, it will be in the range 12 to 26 hours.

In addition, or alternatively to the above criteria, the present invention provides a ligand or a composition comprising a ligand according to the invention having an AUC value (area under the curve) in the range of 1 mg.min/ml or more. In one embodiment, the lower end of the range is 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 100, 200 or 300mg.min/ml. In addition, or alternatively, a ligand or composition according to the invention has an AUC in the range

of up to 600 mg.min/ml. In one embodiment, the upper end of the range is 500, 400, 300, 200, 150, 100, 75 or 50 mg.min/ml. Advantageously a ligand according to the invention will have a AUC in the range selected from the group consisting of the following: 15 to 150mg.min/ml, 15 to 100 mg.min/ml, 15 to 75 mg.min/ml, and 15 to 50mg.min/ml.

In a first embodiment, the dual specific ligand comprises two complementary variable domains, i.e. two variable domains that, in their natural environment, are capable of operating together as a cognate pair or group even if in the context of the present invention they bind separately to their cognate epitopes. For example, the complementary variable domains may be immunoglobulin heavy chain and light chain variable domains (V_H and V_L). V_H and V_L domains are advantageously provided by scFv or Fab antibody fragments.

The inventors have found that the use of complementary variable domains allows the two domain surfaces to pack together and be sequestered from the solvent. Furthermore the complementary domains are able to stabilise each other. In addition, it allows the creation of dual-specific IgG antibodies without the disadvantages of hybrid hybridomas as used in the prior art, or the need to engineer heavy or light chains at the sub-unit interfaces. The dual-specific ligands of the first aspect of the present invention have at least one V_H/V_L pair. A bispecific IgG according to this invention will therefore comprise two such pairs, one pair on each arm of the Y-shaped molecule. Unlike conventional bispecific antibodies or diabodies, therefore, where the ratio of chains used is determinative in the success of the preparation thereof and leads to practical difficulties, the dual specific ligands of the invention are free from issues of chain balance. Chain imbalance in conventional bi-specific antibodies results from the association of two different V_L chains with two different V_H chains, where V_L chain 1 together with V_H chain 1 is able to bind to antigen or epitope 1 and V_L chain 2 together with V_H chain 2 is able to bind to antigen or epitope 1 and the two correct pairings are in some way linked to one another. Thus, only when V_L chain 1 is paired with V_H chain 1 and V_L chain 2 is paired with V_H chain 2 in a single molecule is bi-specificity created. Such bi-specific molecules can be created in two different ways. Firstly, they can be created by association of two existing V_H/V_L pairings that each bind to a different antigen or epitope (for example, in a bi-specific IgG). In this case the V_H/V_L pairings must come all together in a

1:1 ratio in order to create a population of molecules all of which are bi-specific. This never occurs (even when complementary CH domain is enhanced by "knobs into holes" engineering) leading to a mixture of bi-specific molecules and molecules that are only able to bind to one antigen or epitope but not the other. The second way of creating a bi-specific antibody is by the simultaneous association of two different V_H chain with two different V_L chains (for example in a bi-specific diabody). In this case, although there tends to be a preference for V_L chain 1 to pair with V_H chain 1 and V_L chain 2 to pair with V_H chain 2 (which can be enhanced by "knobs into holes" engineering of the V_L and V_H domains), this paring is never achieved in all molecules, leading to a mixed formulation whereby incorrect pairings occur that are unable to bind to either antigen or epitope.

Bi-specific antibodies constructed according to the dual-specific ligand approach according to the first aspect of the present invention overcome all of these problems because the binding to antigen or epitope 1 resides within the V_H or V_L domain and the binding to antigen or epitope 2 resides with the complementary V_L or V_H domain, respectively. Since V_H and V_L domains pair on a 1:1 basis all V_H/V_L pairings will be bi-specific and thus all formats constructed using these V_H/V_L pairings (Fv, scFvs, Fabs, minibodies, IgGs etc) will have 100% bi-specific activity.

In the context of the present invention, first and second "epitopes" are understood to be epitopes which are not the same and are not bound by a single monospecific ligand. They are advantageously on different antigens, one of which acts to increase the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*. Likewise, the first and second antigens are advantageously not the same.

The dual specific ligands of the invention do not include ligands as described in WO 02/02773. Thus, the ligands of the present invention do not comprise complementary V_H/V_L pairs which bind any one or more antigens or epitopes co-operatively. Instead, the ligands according to the first aspect of the invention comprise a V_H/V_L complementary pair, wherein the V domains have different specificities.

Moreover, the ligands according to the first aspect of the invention comprise V_H/V_L complementary pairs having different specificities for non-structurally related epitopes or antigens. Structurally related epitopes or antigens are epitopes or antigens which possess

sufficient structural similarity to be bound by a conventional V_H/V_L complementary pair which acts in a co-operative manner to bind an antigen or epitope; in the case of structurally related epitopes, the epitopes are sufficiently similar in structure that they "fit" into the same binding pocket formed at the antigen binding site of the V_H/V_L dimer.

In a second aspect, the present invention provides a ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin variable domain having a first antigen or epitope binding specificity and a second immunoglobulin variable domain having a second antigen or epitope binding specificity wherein one or both of said first and second variable domains bind to an antigen which increases the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*, and the variable domains are not complementary to one another.

In one embodiment, binding to one variable domain modulates the binding of the ligand to the second variable domain.

In this embodiment, the variable domains may be, for example, pairs of V_H domains or pairs of V_L domains. Binding of antigen at the first site may modulate, such as enhance or inhibit, binding of an antigen at the second site. For example, binding at the first site at least partially inhibits binding of an antigen at a second site. In such an embodiment, the ligand may for example be maintained in the body of a subject organism *in vivo* through binding to a protein which increases the half-life of the ligand until such a time as it becomes bound to the second target antigen and dissociates from the half-life increasing protein.

Modulation of binding in the above context is achieved as a consequence of the structural proximity of the antigen binding sites relative to one another. Such structural proximity can be achieved by the nature of the structural components linking the two or more antigen binding sites, eg by the provision of a ligand with a relatively rigid structure that holds the antigen binding sites in close proximity. Advantageously, the two or more antigen binding sites are in physically close proximity to one another such that one site modulates the binding of antigen at another site by a process which involves steric hindrance and/or conformational changes within the immunoglobulin molecule.

The first and the second antigen binding domains may be associated either covalently or non-covalently. In the case that the domains are covalently associated, then the association may be mediated for example by disulphide bonds or by a polypeptide linker such as $(Gly_4Ser)_n$, where n = from 1 to 8, eg, 2, 3 or 4.

Ligands according to the invention may be combined into non-immunoglobulin multi-ligand structures to form multivalent complexes, which bind target molecules with the same antigen, thereby providing superior avidity, while at least one variable domain binds an antigen to increase the half life of the multimer. For example natural bacterial receptors such as SpA have been used as scaffolds for the grafting of CDRs to generate ligands which bind specifically to one or more epitopes. Details of this procedure are described in US 5,831,012. Other suitable scaffolds include those based on fibronectin and affibodies. Details of suitable procedures are described in WO 98/58965. Other suitable scaffolds include lipocallin and CTLA4, as described in van den Beuken *et al.*, J. Mol. Biol. (2001) 310, 591-601, and scaffolds such as those described in WO0069907 (Medical Research Council), which are based for example on the ring structure of bacterial GroEL or other chaperone polypeptides.

Protein scaffolds may be combined; for example, CDRs may be grafted on to a CTLA4 scaffold and used together with immunoglobulin V_H or V_L domains to form a ligand. Likewise, fibronectin, lipocallin and other scaffolds may be combined.

In the case that the variable domains are selected from V-gene repertoires selected for instance using phage display technology as herein described, then these variable domains can comprise a universal framework region, such that is they may be recognised by a specific generic ligand as herein defined. The use of universal frameworks, generic ligands and the like is described in WO99/20749.

Where V-gene repertoires are used variation in polypeptide sequence is preferably located within the structural loops of the variable domains. The polypeptide sequences of either variable domain may be altered by DNA shuffling or by mutation in order to enhance the interaction of each variable domain with its complementary pair.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the 'dual-specific ligand' is a single chain Fv fragment. In an alternative embodiment of the invention, the 'dual-specific ligand' consists of a Fab region of an antibody.

The variable regions may be derived from antibodies directed against target antigens or epitopes. Alternatively they may be derived from a repertoire of single antibody domains such as those expressed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage. Selection may be performed as described below.

In a third aspect, the invention provides a method for producing a ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain having a first binding specificity and a second single immunoglobulin single variable domain having a second (different) binding specificity, one or both of the binding specificities being specific for an antigen which increases the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) selecting a first variable domain by its ability to bind to a first epitope,

(b) selecting a second variable region by its ability to bind to a second epitope,

(c) combining the variable domains; and

(d) selecting the ligand by its ability to bind to said first epitope and to said second epitope.

The ligand can bind to the first and second epitopes either simultaneously or, where there is competition between the binding domains for epitope binding, the binding of one domain may preclude the binding of another domain to its cognate epitope. In one embodiment, therefore, step (d) above requires simultaneous binding to both first and second (and possibly further) epitopes; in another embodiment, the binding to the first and second epitoes is not simultaneous.

The epitopes are preferably on separate antigens.

Ligands advantageously comprise V_H/V_L combinations, or V_H/V_H or V_L/V_L combinations of immunoglobulin variable domains, as described above.

In one embodiment, said first variable domain is selected for binding to said first epitope in absence of a complementary variable domain. In a further embodiment, said first variable domain is selected for binding to said first epitope/antigen in the presence of a third variable domain in which said third variable domain is different from said second variable domain and is complementary to the first domain. Similarly, the second domain may be selected in the absence or presence of a complementary variable domain.

The antigens or epitopes targeted by the ligands of the invention, in addition to the half-life enhancing protein, may be any antigen or epitope but advantageously is an antigen or epitope that is targeted with therapeutic benefit. They may be, or be part of, polypeptides, proteins or nucleic acids, which may be naturally occurring or synthetic. In this respect, the ligand of the invention may bind the epiotpe or antigen and act as an antagonist or agonist (eg, EPO receptor agonist). One skilled in the art will appreciate that the choice is large and varied. They may be for instance human or animal proteins, cytokines, cytokine receptors, enzymes co-factors for enzymes or DNA binding proteins. Suitable cytokines and growth factors include but are not limited to: ApoE, Apo-SAA, BDNF, Cardiotrophin-1, EGF, EGF receptor, ENA-78, Eotaxin, Eotaxin-2, Exodus-2, EpoR, FGF-acidic, FGF-basic, fibroblast growth factor-10, FLT3 ligand, Fractalkine (CX3C), GDNF, G-CSF, GM-CSF, GF-β1, insulin, IFN-γ, IGF-I, IGF-II, IL-1α, IL-1β, IL-2, IL-3, IL-4, IL-5, IL-6, IL-7, IL-8 (72 a.a.), IL-8 (77 a.a.), IL-9, IL-10, IL-11, IL-12, IL-13, IL-15, IL-16, IL-17, IL-18 (IGIF), Inhibin α, Inhibin β, IP-10, keratinocyte growth factor-2 (KGF-2), KGF, Leptin, LIF, Lymphotactin, Mullerian inhibitory substance, monocyte colony inhibitory factor, monocyte attractant protein, M-CSF, MDC (67 a.a.), MDC (69 a.a.), MCP-1 (MCAF), MCP-2, MCP-3, MCP-4, MDC (67 a.a.), MDC (69 a.a.), MIG, MIP-1α, MIP-1β, MIP-3α, MIP-3β, MIP-4, myeloid progenitor inhibitor factor-1 (MPIF-1), NAP-2, Neurturin, Nerve growth factor, β-NGF, NT-3, NT-4, Oncostatin M, PDGF-AA, PDGF-AB, PDGF-BB, PF-4, RANTES, SDF1α, SDF1β, SCF, SCGF, stem cell factor (SCF), TARC, TGF-α, TGF-β, TGF-β2, TGF-β3, tumour necrosis factor (TNF), TNF-α, TNF-β, TNF receptor I, TNF receptor II, TNIL-1, TPO, VEGF, VEGF receptor 1, VEGF receptor 2, VEGF receptor 3, GCP-2, GRO/MGSA, GRO-β, GRO-γ, HCC1, 1-309, HER 1, HER 2, HER 3 and HER 4. Cytokine receptors include receptors for the foregoing cytokines. It will be appreciated that this list is by no means exhaustive.

In one embodiment of the invention, the variable domains are derived from a respective antibody directed against the antigen or epitope. In a preferred embodiment the variable domains are derived from a repertoire of single variable antibody domains.

In a further aspect, the present invention provides one or more nucleic acid molecules encoding at least a dual-specific ligand as herein defined. The dual specific ligand may be encoded on a single nucleic acid molecule; alternatively, each domain may be encoded by a separate nucleic acid molecule. Where the ligand is encoded by a single nucleic acid molecule, the domains may be expressed as a fusion polypeptide, in the manner of a scFv molecule, or may be separately expressed and subsequently linked together, for example using chemical linking agents. Ligands expressed from separate nucleic acids will be linked together by appropriate means.

The nucleic acid may further encode a signal sequence for export of the polypeptides from a host cell upon expression and may be fused with a surface component of a filamentous bacteriophage particle (or other component of a selection display system) upon expression.

In a further aspect the present invention provides a vector comprising nucleic acid encoding a dual specific ligand according to the present invention.

In a yet further aspect, the present invention provides a host cell transfected with a vector encoding a dual specific ligand according to the present invention.

Expression from such a vector may be configured to produce, for example on the surface of a bacteriophage particle, variable domains for selection. This allows selection of displayed variable regions and thus selection of 'dual-specific ligands' using the method of the present invention.

The present invention further provides a kit comprising at least a dual-specific ligand according to the present invention.

Dual-Specific ligands according to the present invention preferably comprise combinations of heavy and light chain domains. For example, the dual specific ligand may comprise a V_H domain and a V_L domain, which may be linked together in the form of an scFv. In addition, the ligands may comprise one or more C_H or C_L domains. For example, the ligands may comprise a C_H1 domain, C_H2 or C_H3 domain, and/or a C_L domain, Cμ1, Cμ2, Cμ3 or Cμ4 domains, or any combination thereof. A hinge region domain may also be included. Such combinations of domains may, for example, mimic natural antibodies, such as IgG or IgM, or fragments thereof, such as Fv, scFv, Fab or $F(ab')_2$ molecules. Other structures, such as a single arm of an IgG molecule comprising V_H, V_L, C_H1 and C_L domains, are envisaged.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the variable regions are selected from single domain V gene repertoires. Generally the repertoire of single antibody domains is displayed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage. In a preferred embodiment each single antibody domain is selected by binding of a phage repertoire to antigen.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention each single variable domain may be selected for binding to its target antigen or epitope in the absence of a complementary variable region. In an alternative embodiment, the single variable domains may be selected for binding to its target antigen or epitope in the presence of a complementary variable region. Thus the first single variable domain may be selected in the presence of a third complementary variable domain, and the second variable domain may be selected in the presence of a fourth complementary variable domain. The complementary third or fourth variable domain may be the natural cognate variable domain having the same specificity as the single domain being tested, or a non-cognate complementary domain – such as a "dummy" variable domain.

Preferably, the dual specific ligand of the invention comprises only two variable domains although several such ligands may be incorporated together into the same protein, for example two such ligands can be incorporated into an IgG or a multimeric immunoglobulin, such as IgM. Alternatively, in another embodiment a plurality of dual specific ligands are combined to form a multimer. For example, two different dual specific ligands are combined to create a tetra-specific molecule.

It will be appreciated by one skilled in the art that the light and heavy variable regions of a dual-specific ligand produced according to the method of the present invention may be on the same polypeptide chain, or alternatively, on different polypeptide chains. In the case that the variable regions are on different polypeptide chains, then they may be linked via a linker, generally a flexible linker (such as a polypeptide chain), a chemical linking group, or any other method known in the art.

In a further aspect, the present invention provides a composition comprising a dual-specific ligand, obtainable by a method of the present invention, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, diluent or excipient.

Moreover, the present invention provides a method for the treatment and/or prevention of disease using a 'dual-specific ligand' or a composition according to the present invention.

In a second configuration, the present invention provides multispecific ligands which comprise at least two on-complementary variable domains. For exampl, the ligands may comprise a pair of V_H domains or a pair of V_L domains. Advantageously, the domains are of non-camelid origin; preferably they are human domains or comprise human framework regions and one or more heterologous CDR regions. CDR and framework regions are those reginos of an immunoglobulin variable domain as defined in the Kabat database of Sequences of Proteins of Immunological Interest.

The variable domains in the multispecific ligands according to the second configuration of the invention may be arranged in an open or a closed conformation; that is, they may be arranged such that the variable domains can bind their cognate ligands independently and simultaneously, or such that only one of the variable domains may bind its cognate ligand at any one time.

The inventors have realised that under certain structural conditions, non-complementary variable domains (for example two light chain variable domains or two heavy chain variable domains) may be present in a ligand such that binding of a first epitope to a first

variable domain inhibits the binding of a second epitope to a second variable domain, even though such non-complementary domains do not operate together as a cognate pair.

Advantageously, the antibody comprises two or more pairs of variable domains; that is, it comprises at least four variable domains. Advantageously, the four variable domains comprise frameworks of human origin.

In a preferred embodiment, the human frameworks are identical to those of human germline sequences.

The present inventors consider that such antibodies will be of particular use in ligand binding assays for therapeutic and other uses.

Thus, in a first aspect of the second configuration, the present invention provides a method for producing a multispecific ligand comprising the steps of:

a) selecting a first epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a first epitope,

b) selecting a second epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a second epitope,

c) combining the epitope binding domains; and

d) selecting the closed conformation multispecific ligand by its ability to bind to said first second epitope and said second epitope.

In a further aspect of the second configuration, the invention provides a closed conformation multi-specific ligand comprising a first epitope binding domain having a first epitope binding specificity and a non-complementary second epitope binding domain having a second epitope binding specificity, wherein the first and second binding specificities compete for epitope binding such that the closed conformation multi-specific ligand may not bind both epitopes simultaneously, said method comprising the steps of:

a) selecting a first epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a first epitope,

b) selecting a second epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a second epitope,

c) combining the epitope binding domains such that the domains are in a closed conformation; and

d) selecting the closed conformation multispecific ligand by its ability to bind to said first second epitope and said second epitope, but not to both said first and second epitopes simultaneously.

An alternative embodiment of the above aspect of the of the second configuration of the invention optionally comprises a further step (bi) comprising selecting a third or further epitope binding domain. In this way the multi-specific ligand produced, whether of open or closed conformation, comprises more than two epitope binding specificities. In a preferred aspect of the second configuration of the invention, where the multi-specific ligand comprises more than two epitope binding domains, at least two of said domains are in a closed conformation and compete for binding; other domains may compete for binding or may be free to associate independently with their cognate epitope(s).

According to the present invention the term 'multi-specific ligand' refers to a ligand which possesses more than one epitope binding specificity as herein defined.

As herein defined the term 'closed conformation' (multi-specific ligand) means that the epitope binding domains of the ligand are attached to or associated with each other, optionally by means of a protein skeleton, such that epitope binding by one epitope binding domain competes with epitope binding by another epitope binding domain. That is, cognate epitopes may be bound by each epitope binding domain individually but not simultaneosuly. The closed conformation of the ligand can be achieved using methods herein described.

"Open conformation" means that the epitope binding domains of the ligand are attached to or associated with each other, optionally by means of a protein skeleton, such that epitope binding by one epitope binding domain does not compete with epitope binding by another epitope binding domain.

As referred to herein, the term 'competes' means that the binding of a first epitope to its cognate epitope binding domain is inhibited when a second epitope is bound to its

cognate epitope binding domain. For example, bindgin may be inhibited sterically, for example by physical blocking of a binding domain or by alteration of the structure or environment of a binding domain such that its affinity or avidity for an epitope is reduced.

In a further embodiment of the second configuration of the invention, the epitopes may displace each other on binding. For example, a first epitope may be present on an antigen which, on binding to its cognate first binding domain, causes steric hindrance of a second binding domain, or a coformational change therein, which displaces the epitope bound to the second binding domain.

Advantageously, binding is reduced by 25% or more, advantageously 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90% or more, and preferably up to 100% or nearly so, such that binding is completely inhibited. Binding of epitopes can be measured by conventional antigen binding assays, such as ELISA, by fluorescence based techniques, including FRET, or by techniques such as suface plasmon resonance which measure the mass of molecules.

According to the method of the present invention, advantageously, each epitope binding domain is of a different epitope binding specificity.

In the context of the present invention, first and second "epitopes" are understood to be epitopes which are not the same and are not bound by a single monospecific ligand. They may be on different antigens or on the same antigen, but separated by a sufficient distance that they do not form a single entity that could be bound by a single mono-specific V_H/V_L binding pair of a conventional antibody. Experimentally, if both of the individual variable domains in single chain antibody form (domain antibodies or dAbs) are separately competed by a monospecific V_H/V_L ligand against two epitopes then those two epitopes are not sufficiently far apart to be considered separate epitopes according to the present invention.

The closed conformation multispecific ligands of the invention do not include ligands as described in WO 02/02773. Thus, the ligands of the present invention do not comprise complementary V_H/V_L pairs which bind any one or more antigens or epitopes co-operatively. Instead, the ligands according to the invention preferably comprise non-

complementary V_H-V_H or V_L-V_L pairs. Advantageously, each V_H or V_L domain in each V_H-V_H or V_L-V_L pair has a different epitope binding specificity, and the epitope binding sites are so arranged that the binding of an epitope at one site competes with the binding of an epitope at another site.

According to the present invention, advantageously, each epitope binding domain comprises an immunoglobulin variable domain. More advantageously, each immunoglobulin variable domain will be either a variable light chain domain (V_L) or a variable heavy chain domain V_H. In the second configuration of the present invention, the immunoglobulin domains when present on a ligand according to the present invention are non-complementary, that is they do not associate to form a V_H/V_L antigen binding site. Thus, multi-specific ligands as defined in the second configuratino of the invention comprise immunoglobulin domains of the same sub-type, that is either variable light chain domains (V_L) or variable heavy chain domains (V_H).

Advantageously, the single variable domains are derived from antibodies selected for binding activity against different antigens or epitopes. For example, the variable domains may be isolated at least in part by human immunisation. Alternative methods are known in the art, including isolation from human antibody libraries and synthesis of artificial antibody genes.

The variable domains advantageously bind superantigens, such as protein A or protein L. Binding to superantigens is a property of correctly folded antibody variable domains, and allows such domains to be isolated from, for example, libraries of recombinant or mutant domains.

Epitope binding domains according to the present invention comprise a protein scaffold and epitope interaction sites (which are advantageously on the surface of the protein scaffold).

Epitope binding domains may also be based on protein scaffolds or skeletons other than immunoglobulin domains. For example natural bacterial receptors such as SpA have been used as scaffolds for the grafting of CDRs to generate ligands which bind specifically to

one or more epitopes. Details of this procedure are described in US 5,831,012. Other suitable scaffolds include those based on fibronectin and affibodies. Details of suitable procedures are described in WO 98/58965. Other suitable scaffolds include lipocallin and CTLA4, as described in van den Beuken *et al.*, J. Mol. Biol. (2001) 310, 591-601, and scaffolds such as those described in WO0069907 (Medical Research Council), which are based for example on the ring structure of bacterial GroEL or other chaperone polypeptides.

Protein scaffolds may be combined; for example, CDRs may be grafted on to a CTLA4 scaffold and used together with immunoglobulin V_H or V_L domains to form a multivalent ligand. Likewise, fibronectin, lipocallin and other scaffolds may be combined.

It will be appreciated by one skilled in the art that the epitope binding domains of a closed conformation multispecific ligand produced according to the method of the present invention may be on the same polypeptide chain, or alternatively, on different polypeptide chains. In the case that the variable regions are on different polypeptide chains, then they may be linked via a linker, advantageously a flexible linker (such as a polypeptide chain), a chemical linking group, or any other method known in the art.

The first and the second epitope binding domains may be associated either covalently or non-covalently. In the case that the domains are covalently associated, then the association may be mediated for example by disulphide bonds.

In the second configuation of the invention, the first and the second epitopes are preferably different. They may be, or be part of, polypeptides, proteins or nucleic acids, which may be naturally occurring or synthetic. In this respect, the ligand of the invention may bind an epiotpe or antigen and act as an antagonist or agonist (eg, EPO receptor agonist). The epitope binding domains of the ligand in one embodiment have the same epitope specificity, and may for example simultaneously bind their epitope when multiple copies of the epitope are present on the same antigen. In another embodiment, these epitopes are provided on different antigens such that the ligand can bind the epitopes and bridge the antigens. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the choice of epitopes and antigens is large and varied. They may be for instance human or animal proteins,

cytokines, cytokine receptors, enzymes co-factors for enzymes or DNA binding proteins. Suitable cytokines and growth factors include but are not limited to: ApoE, Apo-SAA, BDNF, Cardiotrophin-1, EGF, EGF receptor, ENA-78, Eotaxin, Eotaxin-2, Exodus-2, EpoR, FGF-acidic, FGF-basic, fibroblast growth factor-10, FLT3 ligand, Fractalkine (CX3C), GDNF, G-CSF, GM-CSF, GF-β1, insulin, IFN-γ, IGF-I, IGF-II, IL-1α, IL-1β, IL-2, IL-3, IL-4, IL-5, IL-6, IL-7, IL-8 (72 a.a.), IL-8 (77 a.a.), IL-9, IL-10, IL-11, IL-12, IL-13, IL-15, IL-16, IL-17, IL-18 (IGIF), Inhibin α, Inhibin β, IP-10, keratinocyte growth factor-2 (KGF-2), KGF, Leptin, LIF, Lymphotactin, Mullerian inhibitory substance, monocyte colony inhibitory factor, monocyte attractant protein, M-CSF, MDC (67 a.a.), MDC (69 a.a.), MCP-1 (MCAF), MCP-2, MCP-3, MCP-4, MDC (67 a.a.), MDC (69 a.a.), MIG, MIP-1α, MIP-1β, MIP-3α, MIP-3β, MIP-4, myeloid progenitor inhibitor factor-1 (MPIF-1), NAP-2, Neurturin, Nerve growth factor, β-NGF, NT-3, NT-4, Oncostatin M, PDGF-AA, PDGF-AB, PDGF-BB, PF-4, RANTES, SDF1α, SDF1β, SCF, SCGF, stem cell factor (SCF), TARC, TGF-α, TGF-β, TGF-β2, TGF-β3, tumour necrosis factor (TNF), TNF-α, TNF-β, TNF receptor I, TNF receptor II, TNIL-1, TPO, VEGF, VEGF receptor 1, VEGF receptor 2, VEGF receptor 3, GCP-2, GRO/MGSA, GRO-β, GRO-γ, HCC1, 1-309, HER 1, HER 2, HER 3 and HER 4. Cytokine receptors include receptors for the foregoing cytokines. It will be appreciated that this list is by no means exhaustive. Where the closed conformation multispecific ligand binds to two epitopes (on the same or different antigens), the antigen(s) may be selected from this list.

Advantageously, dual specific ligands may be used to target cytokines and other molecules which cooperate synergistically in therapeutic situations in the body of an organism. The inventnion therefore porvides a method for synergising the activity of two or more cytokines, comprising administering a dual specific ligand capable of binding to said two or more cytokines. In this aspect of the invention, the dual specific ligand may be any dual specific ligand, including a ligand composed of complementary and/or non-complementary domains, a ligand in an open conformation, and a ligand in a closed conformation. For example, this aspect of the invention relates to combinations of V_H domains and V_L domains, V_H domains only and V_L domains only.

Preferably, the cytokines bound by the dual specific ligands of this aspect of the invention are slected from the following list:

Pairing	Incidence	Therapeutic relevant references.
TNF/TGF-b	12	• TGF-b and TNF when injected into the ankle joint of mouse collagen induced arthritis model significantly enhanced joint inflammation. In non-collagen challenged mice there was no effect.
TNF/IL-1	112	• TNF and IL-1 synergize in the pathology of uveitis. • TNF and IL-1 synergize in the pathology of malaria (hypoglycaemia, NO). • TNF and IL-1 synergize in the induction of polymorphonuclear (PMN) cells migration in inflammation. • IL-1 and TNF synergize to induce PMN infiltration into the mouse peritoneum. • IL-1 and TNF synergize to induce the secretion of IL-1 by endothelial cells. Important in inflammation. • IL-1 or TNF alone induced some cellular infiltration into rabbit knee synovium. IL-1 induced PMNs, TNF – monocytes. Together they induced a more severe infiltration due to increased PMNs. • Circulating myocardial depressant substance (present in sepsis) is low levels of IL-1 and TNF acting synergistically.
TNF/IL-2		• None – most relating to synergisitic activation of killer T-cells.
TNF/IL-3		• None
TNF/IL-4		• IL-4 and TNF synergize to induce VCAM expression on endothelial cells. Implied to have a role in asthma. Same for synovium – implicated in RA. • TNF and IL-4 synergize to induce IL-6 expression in keratinocytes.
TNF/IL-6		• None
TNF/IL-8		• TNF and IL-8 synergized with PMNs to activate platelets. Implicated in Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome.
TNF/IL-10		• IL-10 induces and synergizes with TNF in the induction of HIV expression in chronically infected T-cells.
TNF/IL-12		• None
TNF/IFN-g		• MHC induction in the brain. • Synergize in anti-viral response/IFN-b induction. • Neutrophil activation/ respiratory burst. • Endothelial cell activation • Toxicities noted when patients treated with TNF/IFN-g as anti-viral therapy (will find out more). • Fractalkine expression by human astrocytes. • Many papers on inflammatory responses – i.e. LPS, also macrophage activation. • Anti-TNF and anti-IFN-g synergize to protect mice from lethal endotoxemia.

TGF-b/IL-1		• Prostaglndin synthesis by osteoblasts • IL-6 production by intestinal epithelial cells (inflammation model) • Stimulates IL-11 and IL-6 in lung fibroblasts (inflammation model) • IL-6 and IL-8 production in the retina
TGF-b/IL-6		• Chondrocarcoma proliferation
IL-1/IL-2		• B-cell activation • LAK cell activation • T-cell activation
IL-1/IL-3		• None
IL-1/IL-4		• B-cell activation • IL-4 induces IL-1 expression in endothelial cell activation.
IL-1/IL-6		• B cell activation • T cell activation (can replace accessory cells) • IL-1 induces IL-6 expression • C3 and serum amyloid expression (acute phase response) • HIV expression • Cartilage collagen breakdown.
IL-1/IL-8		• None
IL-1/IL-10		• None
IL-1/IFN-g		• None
IL-2/IL-3		• T-cell proliferation • B cell proliferation
IL-2/IL-4		• B-cell proliferation • T-cell proliferation
IL-2/IL-5		• B-cell proliferation/ Ig secretion • IL-5 induces IL-2 receptors on B-cells
IL-2/IL-6		• Development of cytotoxic T-cells
IL-2/IL-7		• None
IL-2/IL-10		• B-cell activation
IL-2/IL-12		• None
IL-2/IL-15		• None
IL-2/IFN-g		• Ig secretion by B-cells • IL-2 induces IFN-g expression by T-cells
IL-2/IFN-a/b		• None
IL-3/IL-4		• Synergize in mast cell growth
IL-3/IL-5		• None
IL-3/IL-6		• None
IL-3/IFN-g		• None
IL-4/IL-5		• Enhanced mast cell histamine etc. secretion in response to IgE
IL-4/IL-6		• None??
IL-4/IL-10		• None
IL-4/IL-12		• None
IL-4/IL-13		• None
IL-4/IFN-g		• None
IL-4/SCF		• Mast cell proliferation
IL-5/IL-6		• None
IL-5/IFN-g		• None
IL-6/IL-10		• None

IL-6/IL-11		• None
IL-6/IFN-g		• None
IL-10/IL-12		• None
IL-10/IFN-g		• None
IL-12/IL-18		• None
IL-12/IFN-g		• IL-12 induces IFN-g expression by B and T-cells as part of immune stimulation.
IL-18/IFN-g		• None
Anti-TNF/anti-CD4		• Synergistic therapeutic effect in DBA/1 arthritic mice.

In one embodiment of the second configuration of the invention, the variable domains are derived from an antibody directed against the first and/or second antigen or epitope. In a preferred embodiment the variable domains are derived from a repertoire of single variable antibody domains. In one example, the repertoire is a repertoire that is not created in an animal or a synthetic repertoire. In another example, the single variable domains are not isolated (at least in part) by animal immunisation. Thus, the single domains can be isolated from a naïve library.

The second configuration of the invention, in another aspect, provides a multi-specific ligand comprising a first epitope binding domain having a first epitope binding specificity and a non-complementary second epitope binding domain having a second epitope binding specificity.

In a further aspect, the present invention provides a closed conformation multi-specific ligand comprising a first epitope binding domain having a first epitope binding specificity and a non-complementary second epitope binding domain having a second epitope binding specificity wherein the first and second binding specificities are capable of competing for epitope binding such that the closed conformation multi-specific ligand cannot bind both epitopes simultaneously.

Preferably, the multi-specific ligands according to the above two aspects of the invention are obtainable by the method of the first aspect of the invention.

According to the above aspect of the second configuration of the invention, advantageously the first epitope binding domain and the second epitope binding domains are non-complementary immunoglobulin variable domains, as herein defined. That is either V_H-V_H or V_L-V_L variable domains.

In an alternative embodiment of the above aspect of the second configuration of the invention, at least one epitope binding domain comprises a non-immunoglobulin 'protein scaffold' or 'protein skeleton' as herein defined. Suitable non-immunoglobulin protein scaffolds include but are not limited to any of those selected from the group consisting of: SpA, fibronectin, GroEL and other chaperones, lipocallin, CCTLA4 and affibodies, as set forth above.

According to the above aspect of the second configuration of the invention, advantageously, the epitope binding domains are attached to a 'protein skeleton'. Advantageously, a protein skeleton according to the invention is an immunoglobulin skeleton.

According to the present invention, the term 'immunoglobulin skeleton' refers to a protein which comprises at least one immunoglobulin fold and which acts as a nucleus for one or more epitope binding domains, as defined herein.

Preferred immunoglobulin skeletons as herein defined includes any one or more of those selected from the following: an immunoglobulin molecule comprising at least (i) the CL (kappa or lambda subclass) domain of an antibody; or (ii) the CH1 domain of an antibody heavy chain; an immunoglobulin molecule comprising the CH1 and CH2 domains of an antibody heavy chain; an immunoglobulin molecule comprising the CH1, CH2 and CH3 domains of an antibody heavy chain; or any of the subset (ii) in conjunction with the CL (kappa or lambda subclass) domain of an antibody. A hinge region domain may also be included. Such combinations of domains may, for example, mimic natural antibodies, such as IgG or IgM, or fragments thereof, such as Fv, scFv, Fab or $F(ab')_2$ molecules. Those skilled in the art will be aware that this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Linking of the skeleton to the epitope binding domains, as herein defined may be achieved at the polypeptide level, that is after expression of the nucleic acid encoding the skeleton and/or the epitope binding domains. Alternatively, the linking step may be performed at the nucleic acid level. Methods of linking a protein skeleton according to the present invention, to the one or more epitope binding domains include the use of protein chemistry and/or molecular biology techniques which will be familiar to those skilled in the art and are described herein.

Advantageously, the closed conformation multispecific ligand may comprise a first domain capable of binding a target molecule, and a second domain capable of binding a molecule or group which extends the half-life of the ligand. For example, the molecule or group may be a bulky agent, such as HSA or a cell matrix protein. In a preferred embodiment, the closed conformation multispecific ligand may be capable of binding the target molecule only on displacement of the half-life enhancing molecule or group. Thus, for example, a closed conformation multispecific ligand is maintained in circulation in the bloodstream of a subject by a bulky molecule such as HSA. When a target molecule is encountered, competition between the binding domains of the closed conformation multispecific ligand results in displacement of the HSA and binding of the target.

In a further aspect of the second configuration of the invention, the present invention provides one or more nucleic acid molecules encoding at least a multispecific ligand as herein defined. In one embodiment,the ligand is a closed conformation ligand. In another embodiment, it is an open conformation ligand. The multispecific ligand may be encoded on a single nucleic acid molecule; alternatively, each epitope binding domain may be encoded by a separate nucleic acid molecule. Where the ligand is encoded by a single nucleic acid molecule, the domains may be expressed as a fusion polypeptide, or may be separately expressed and subsequently linked together, for example using chemical linking agents. Ligands expressed from separate nucleic acids will be linked together by appropriate means.

The nucleic acid may further encode a signal sequence for export of the polypeptides from a host cell upon expression and may be fused with a surface component of a

filamentous bacteriophage particle (or other component of a selection display system) upon expression.

In a further aspect of the second configuration of the invention the present invention provides a vector comprising nucleic acid according to the present invention.

In a yet further aspect, the present invention provides a host cell transfected with a vector according to the present invention.

Expression from such a vector may be configured to produce, for example on the surface of a bacteriophage particle, epitope binding domains for selection. This allows selection of displayed domains and thus selection of 'multispecific ligands' using the method of the present invention.

In a preferred embodiment of the second configuration of the invention, the epitope binding domains are immunoglobulin variable regions and are selected from single domain V gene repertoires. Generally the repertoire of single antibody domains is displayed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage. In a preferred embodiment each single antibody domain is selected by binding of a phage repertoire to antigen.

The present invention further provides a kit comprising at least a closed conformation multispecific ligand according to the present invention. Kits according to the invention may be, for example, diagnostic kits, therapeutic kits, kits for the detectino of chemical or biological species, and the like.

In a further aspect still of the second configuration of the invention, the present invention provides a homogenous immunoassay using a ligand according to the present invention.

In a further aspect still of the second configuration of the invention, the present invention provides a composition comprising a closed conformation multispecific ligand, obtainable by a method of the present invention, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, diluent or excipient.

Moreover, the present invention provides a method for the treatment of disease using a 'closed conformation multispecific ligand' or a composition according to the present invention.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the disease is cancer.

In a further aspect of the second configuration of the invention, the present invention provides a method for the diagnosis, including diagnosis of disease using a closed conformation multispecific ligand, or a composition according to the present invention. Thus in general the binding of an analyte to a closed conformation multispecific ligand may be exploited to displace an agent, which leads to the generation of a signal on displacement. For example, binding of analyte (second antigen) could displace an enzyme (first antigen) bound to the antibody providing the basis for an immunoassay, especially if the enzyme were held to the antibody through its active site.

Thus in a final aspect of the second configuration, the present invention provides a method for detecting the presence of a target molecule, comprising:
(a) providing a closed conformation multispecific ligand bound to an agent, said ligand being specific for the target molecule and the agent, wherein the agent which is bound by the ligand leads to the generation of a detectable signal on displacement from the ligand;
(b) exposing the closed conformation multispecific ligand to the target molecule; and
(c) detecting the signal generated as a result of the displacement of the agent.

According to the above aspect of the second configuration of the invention, advantageously, the agent is an enzyme, which is inactive when bound by the closed conformation multi-specific liagnd. Alternatively, the agent may be any one or more selected from the group consisting of the following: the substrate for an enzyme, and a fluorescent, luminescent or chromogenic molecule which is inactive or quenched when bound by the ligand.

Brief Description of the Figures

Figure 1 shows the diversification of V_H/HSA at positions H50, H52, H52a, H53, H55, H56, H58, H95, H96, H97, H98 (DVT or NNK encoded respectively) which are in the antigen binding site of V_H HSA. The sequence of V_K is diversified at positions L50, L53.

Figure 2 shows Library 1: Germline V_K/DVT V_H,
Library 2: Germline V_K/NNK V_H,
Library 3: Germline V_H/DVT V_K
Library 4: Germline V_H/NNK V_K
In pIT2/ScFv format. These libraries were pre-selected for binding to generic ligands protein A and protein L so that the majority of the clones and selected libraries are functional. Libraries were selected on HSA (first round) and β-gal (second round) or HSA β-gal selection or on β-gal (first round) and HSA (second round) β-gal HSA selection. Soluble scFv from these clones of PCR are amplified in the sequence. One clone encoding a dual specific antibody K8 was chosen for further work.

Figure 3 shows an alignment of V_H chains and V_κ chains.

Figure 4 shows the characterisation of the binding properties of the K8 antibody, the binding properties of the K8 antibody characterised by monoclonal faguliser, the dual specific K8 antibody was found to bind HSA and β-gal and displayed on the surface of the phage with absorbant signals greater than 1.0. No cross reactivity with other proteins was detected.

Figure 5 shows soluble scFv ELISA performed using known concentrations of the K8 antibody fragment. A 96-well plate was coated with 100μg of HSA, BSA and β-gal at 10μg/ml and 100μg/ml of Protein A at 1μg/ml concentration. 50μg of the serial dilutions of the K8 scFv was applied and the bound antibody fragments were detected with Protein L-HRP. ELISA results confirm the dual specific nature of the K8 antibody.

Figure 6 shows the binding characteristics of the clone K8V_K/dummy V_H analysed using soluble scFv ELISA. Production of the soluble scFv fragments was induced by IPTG as described by Harrison *et al,* Methods Enzymol. 1996;267:83-109 and the supernatant containing scFv assayed directly. Soluble scFv ELISA is performed as described in example 1 and the bound scFvs were detected with Protein L-HRP. The ELISA results revealed that this clone was still able to bind β-gal, whereas binding BSA was abolished.

Figure 7 shows the sequence of variable domain vectors pIT1 and pIT2.

Figure 8 is a map of the C_H vector used to construct a V_H1/V_H2 multipsecific ligand.

Figure 9 is a map of the V_κ vector used to construct a $V_\kappa1/V_\kappa2$ multispecific ligand.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Definitions

Complementary Two immunoglobulin domains are "complementary" where they belong to families of structures which form cognate pairs or groups or are derived from such families and retain this feature. For example, a V_H domain and a V_L domain of an antibody are complementary; two V_H domains are not complementary, and two V_L domains are not complementary. Complementary domains may be found in other members of the immunoglobulin superfamily, such as the V_α and V_β (or γ and δ) domains of the T-cell receptor. In the context of the second configuration of the present invention, non-complementary domains do not bind a target molecule cooperatively, but act independently on different target epitopes which may be on the same or different molecules. Domains which are artificial, such as domains based on protein scaffolds which do not bind epitopes unless engineered to do so, are non-complementary. Likewise, two domains based on (for example) an immunoglobulin domain and a fibronectin domain are not complementary.

Immunoglobulin This refers to a family of polypeptides which retain the immunoglobulin fold characteristic of antibody molecules, which contains two β sheets and, usually, a conserved disulphide bond. Members of the immunoglobulin superfamily are involved in many aspects of cellular and non-cellular interactions *in vivo*, including widespread roles in the immune system (for example, antibodies, T-cell receptor molecules and the like), involvement in cell adhesion (for example the ICAM molecules) and intracellular signalling (for example, receptor molecules, such as the PDGF receptor). The present invention is applicable to all immunoglobulin superfamily molecules which possess binding domains. Preferably, the present invention relates to antibodies.

Combining Variable domains according to the invention are combined to form a group of domains; for example, complementary domains may be combined, such as V_L domains being combined with V_H domains. Non-complementary domains may also be combined. Domains may be combined in a number of ways, involving linkage of the domains by covalent or non-covalent means.

Domain A domain is a folded protein structure which retains its tertiary structure independently of the rest of the protein. Generally, domains are responsible for discrete functional properties of proteins, and in many cases may be added, removed or transferred to other proteins without loss of function of the remainder of the protein and/or of the domain. By single antibody variable domain we mean a folded polypeptide domain comprising sequences characteristic of antibody variable domains. It therefore includes complete antibody variable domains and modified variable domains, for example in which one or more loops have been replaced by sequences which are not characteristic of antibody variable domains, or antibody variable domains which have been truncated or comprise N- or C-terminal extensions, as well as folded fragments of variable domains which retain at least in part the binding activity and specificity of the full-length domain.

Repertoire A collection of diverse variants, for example polypeptide variants which differ in their primary sequence. A library used in the present invention will encompass a repertoire of polypeptides comprising at least 1000 members.

Library The term library refers to a mixture of heterogeneous polypeptides or nucleic acids. The library is composed of members, which have a single polypeptide or nucleic acid sequence. To this extent, *library* is synonymous with *repertoire*. Sequence differences between library members are responsible for the diversity present in the library. The library may take the form of a simple mixture of polypeptides or nucleic acids, or may be in the form of organisms or cells, for example bacteria, viruses, animal or plant cells and the like, transformed with a library of nucleic acids. Preferably, each individual organism or cell contains only one or a limited number of library members. Advantageously, the nucleic acids are incorporated into expression vectors, in order to allow expression of the polypeptides encoded by the nucleic acids. In a preferred aspect, therefore, a library may take the form of a population of host organisms, each organism containing one or more copies of an expression vector containing a single member of the library in nucleic acid form which can be expressed to produce its corresponding polypeptide member. Thus, the population of host organisms has the potential to encode a large repertoire of genetically diverse polypeptide variants.

A **'closed conformation multi-specific ligand'** describes a multi-specific ligand as herein defined comprising at least two epitope binding domains as herein defined. The term 'closed conformation' (multi-specific ligand) means that the epitope binding domains of the ligand are arranged such that epitope binding by one epitope binding domain competes with epitope binding by another epitope binding domain. That is, cognate epitopes may be bound by each epitope binding domain individually but not simultaneosuly. The closed conformation of the ligand can be achieved using methods herein described.

Antibody An antibody (for example IgG, IgM, IgA, IgD or IgE) or fragment (such as a Fab , $F(ab')_2$, Fv, disulphide linked Fv, scFv, closed conformation multispecific antibody, disulphide-linked scFv, diabody) whether derived from any species naturally producing an antibody, or created by recombinant DNA technology; whether isolated from serum, B-cells, hybridomas, transfectomas, yeast or bacteria).

Dual-specific ligand A ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain and a second immunoglobulin single variable domain as herein defined, wherein the variable regions are capable of binding to two different antigens or two epitopes on the same antigen which are not normally bound by a monospecific immunoglobulin. For example, the two epitopes may be on the same hapten, but are not the same epitope or sufficiently adjacent to be bound by a monospecific ligand. The dual specific ligands according to the invention are composed of variable domains which have different specificities, and do not contain mutually complementary variable domain pairs which have the same specificity.

Antigen A molecule that is bound by a ligand according to the present invention. Typically, antigens are bound by antibody ligands and are capable of raising an antibody response *in vivo*. It may be a polypeptide, protein, nucleic acid or other molecule. Generally, the dual specific ligands according to the invention are selected for target specificity against a particular antigen. In the case of conventional antibodies and fragments thereof, the antibody binding site defined by the variable loops (L1, L2, L3 and H1, H2, H3) is capable of binding to the antigen.

Epitope A unit of structure conventionally bound by an immunoglobulin V_H/V_L pair. Epitopes define the minimum binding site for an antibody, and thus represent the target of specificity of an antibody. In the case of a single domain antibody, an epitope represents the unit of structure bound by a variable domain in isolation.

Generic ligand A ligand that binds to all members of a repertoire. Generally, not bound through the antigen binding site as defined above. Examples include protein A and protein L.

Selecting Derived by screening, or derived by a Darwinian selection process, in which binding interactions are made between a domain and the antigen or epitope or between an antibody and an antigen or epitope. Thus a first variable domain may be selected for binding to an antigen or epitope in the presence or in the absence of a complementary variable domain.

Universal framework A single antibody framework sequence corresponding to the regions of an antibody conserved in sequence as defined by Kabat ("Sequences of Proteins of Immunological Interest", US Department of Health and Human Services) or corresponding to the human germline immunoglobulin repertoire or structure as defined by Chothia and Lesk, (1987) J. Mol. Biol. 196:910-917, The invention provides for the use of a single framework, or a set of such frameworks, which has been found to permit the derivation of virtually any binding specificity though variation in the hypervariable regions alone.

Half-life The time taken for the serum concentration of the ligand to reduce by 50%, *in vivo*, for example due to degradation of the ligand and/or clearance or sequestration of the ligand by natural mechanisms. The ligands of the invention are stabilised *in vivo* and their half-life increased by binding to molecules which resist degradation and/or clearance or sequestration. Typically, such molecules are naturally occurring proteins which themselves have a long half-life *in vivo*. The half-life of a ligand is increased if its fiunctional activity persists, *in vivo*, for a longer period than a similar ligand which is not specific for the half-life increasing molecule. Thus, a ligand specific for HSA and a target molecule is compared with the same ligand wherein the specificity for HSA is not

present, that it does not bind HSA but binds another molecule. For example, it may bind a second epitope on the target molecule. Typically, the half life is increased by 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50% or more. Increases in the range of 2x, 3x, 4x, 5x, 10x, 20x, 30x, 40x, 50x or more of the half life are possible. Alternatively, or in addition, increases in the range of up to 30x, 40x, 50x, 60x, 70x, 80x, 90x, 100x, 150x of the half life are possible.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art (e.g., in cell culture, molecular genetics, nucleic acid chemistry, hybridisation techniques and biochemistry). Standard techniques are used for molecular, genetic and biochemical methods (see generally, Sambrook *et al.*, Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2d ed. (1989) Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y. and Ausubel *et al.*, Short Protocols in Molecular Biology (1999) 4th Ed, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. which are incorporated herein by reference) and chemical methods.

Preparation of immunoglobulin based multi-specific ligands

Dual specific ligands according to the invention, whether open or closed in conformation according to the desired configuration of the invention, may be prepared according to previously established techniques, used in the field of antibody engineering, for the preparation of scFv, "phage" antibodies and other engineered antibody molecules. Techniques for the preparation of antibodies, and in particular bispecific antibodies, are for example described in the following reviews and the references cited therein: Winter & Milstein, (1991) Nature 349:293-299; Plueckthun (1992) Immunological Reviews 130:151-188; Wright *et al.*, (1992) Crti. Rev. Immunol.12:125-168; Holliger, P. & Winter, G. (1993) Curr. Op. Biotechn. 4, 446-449; Carter, *et al.* (1995) J. Hematother. 4, 463-470; Chester, K.A. & Hawkins, R.E. (1995) Trends Biotechn. 13, 294-300; Hoogenboom, H.R. (1997) Nature Biotechnol. 15, 125-126; Fearon, D. (1997) Nature Biotechnol. 15, 618-619; Plückthun, A. & Pack, P. (1997) Immunotechnology 3, 83-105;

Carter, P. & Merchant, A.M. (1997) Curr. Opin. Biotechnol. 8, 449-454; Holliger, P. & Winter, G. (1997) Cancer Immunol. Immunother. 45,128-130.

The invention provides for the selection of variable domains against two different antigens or epitopes, and subsequent combination of the variable domains.

The techniques employed for selection of the variable domains employ libraries and selection procedures which are known in the art. Natural libraries (Marks *et al.* (1991) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **222**: 581; Vaughan *et al.* (1996) *Nature Biotech.*, **14**: 309) which use rearranged V genes harvested from human B cells are well known to those skilled in the art. Synthetic libraries (Hoogenboom & Winter (1992) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **227**: 381; Barbas *et al.* (1992) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **89**: 4457; Nissim *et al.* (1994) *EMBO J.*, **13**: 692; Griffiths *et al.* (1994) *EMBO J.*, **13**: 3245; De Kruif *et al.* (1995) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **248**: 97) are prepared by cloning immunoglobulin V genes, usually using PCR. Errors in the PCR process can lead to a high degree of randomisation. V_H and/or V_L libraries may be selected against target antigens or epitopes separately, in which case single domain binding is directly selected for, or together.

A preferred method for making a dual specific ligand according to the present invention comprises using a selection system in which a repertoire of variable domains is selected for binding to a first antigen or epitope and a repertoire of variable domains is selected for binding to a second antigen or epitope. The selected variable first and second variable domains are then combined and the dual-specific selected for binding to both first and second antigen or epitope. Closed conformation ligands are selected for binding both first and second antigen or epitope in isolation but not simultaneously.

A. Library vector systems

A variety of selection systems are known in the art which are suitable for use in the present invention. Examples of such systems are described below.

Bacteriophage lambda expression systems may be screened directly as bacteriophage plaques or as colonies of lysogens, both as previously described (Huse *et al.* (1989)

Science, **246**: 1275; Caton and Koprowski (1990) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.*, **87**; Mullinax *et al.* (1990) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.*, **87**: 8095; Persson *et al.* (1991) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.*, **88**: 2432) and are of use in the invention. Whilst such expression systems can be used to screening up to 10^6 different members of a library, they are not really suited to screening of larger numbers (greater than 10^6 members).

Of particular use in the construction of libraries are selection display systems, which enable a nucleic acid to be linked to the polypeptide it expresses. As used herein, a selection display system is a system that permits the selection, by suitable display means, of the individual members of the library by binding the generic and/or target ligands.

Selection protocols for isolating desired members of large libraries are known in the art, as typified by phage display techniques. Such systems, in which diverse peptide sequences are displayed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage (Scott and Smith (1990) *Science*, **249**: 386), have proven useful for creating libraries of antibody fragments (and the nucleotide sequences that encoding them) for the *in vitro* selection and amplification of specific antibody fragments that bind a target antigen (McCafferty *et al.*, WO 92/01047). The nucleotide sequences encoding the V_H and V_L regions are linked to gene fragments which encode leader signals that direct them to the periplasmic space of *E. coli* and as a result the resultant antibody fragments are displayed on the surface of the bacteriophage, typically as fusions to bacteriophage coat proteins (e.g., pIII or pVIII). Alternatively, antibody fragments are displayed externally on lambda phage capsids (phagebodies). An advantage of phage-based display systems is that, because they are biological systems, selected library members can be amplified simply by growing the phage containing the selected library member in bacterial cells. Furthermore, since the nucleotide sequence that encode the polypeptide library member is contained on a phage or phagemid vector, sequencing, expression and subsequent genetic manipulation is relatively straightforward.

Methods for the construction of bacteriophage antibody display libraries and lambda phage expression libraries are well known in the art (McCafferty *et al.* (1990) *Nature*, **348**: 552; Kang *et al.* (1991) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.*, **88**: 4363; Clackson *et al.* (1991) *Nature*, **352**: 624; Lowman *et al.* (1991) *Biochemistry*, **30**: 10832; Burton *et al.*

(1991) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci U.S.A.*, **88**: 10134; Hoogenboom *et al.* (1991) Nucleic Acids Res., **19**: 4133; Chang *et al.* (1991) *J. Immunol.*, **147**: 3610; Breitling *et al.* (1991) *Gene*, **104**: 147; Marks *et al.* (1991) supra; Barbas *et al.* (1992) supra; Hawkins and Winter (1992) *J. Immunol.*, **22**: 867; Marks *et al.*, 1992, *J. Biol. Chem.*, **267**: 16007; Lerner *et al.* (1992) *Science*, **258**: 1313, incorporated herein by reference).

One particularly advantageous approach has been the use of scFv phage-libraries (Huston *et al.*, 1988, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci U.S.A., 85: 5879-5883; Chaudhary *et al.* (1990) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci U.S.A., 87: 1066-1070; McCafferty *et al.* (1990) supra; Clackson *et al.* (1991) *Nature*, **352**: 624; Marks *et al.* (1991) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **222**: 581; Chiswell *et al.* (1992) Trends Biotech., **10**: 80; Marks *et al.* (1992) *J. Biol. Chem.*, **267**). Various embodiments of scFv libraries displayed on bacteriophage coat proteins have been described. Refinements of phage display approaches are also known, for example as described in WO96/06213 and WO92/01047 (Medical Research Council *et al.*) and WO97/08320 (Morphosys), which are incorporated herein by reference.

Other systems for generating libraries of polypeptides involve the use of cell-free enzymatic machinery for the *in vitro* synthesis of the library members. In one method, RNA molecules are selected by alternate rounds of selection against a target ligand and PCR amplification (Tuerk and Gold (1990) *Science*, **249**: 505; Ellington and Szostak (1990) *Nature*, **346**: 818). A similar technique may be used to identify DNA sequences which bind a predetermined human transcription factor (Thiesen and Bach (1990) *Nucleic Acids Res.*, **18**: 3203; Beaudry and Joyce (1992) *Science*, **257**: 635; WO92/05258 and WO92/14843). In a similar way, *in vitro* translation can be used to synthesise polypeptides as a method for generating large libraries. These methods which generally comprise stabilised polysome complexes, are described further in WO88/08453, WO90/05785, WO90/07003, WO91/02076, WO91/05058, and WO92/02536. Alternative display systems which are not phage-based, such as those disclosed in WO95/22625 and WO95/11922 (Affymax) use the polysomes to display polypeptides for selection.

A still further category of techniques involves the selection of repertoires in artificial compartments, which allow the linkage of a gene with its gene product. For example, a selection system in which nucleic acids encoding desirable gene products may be selected

in microcapsules formed by water-in-oil emulsions is described in WO99/02671, WO00/40712 and Tawfik & Griffiths (1998) *Nature Biotechnol* **16**(7), 652-6. Genetic elements encoding a gene product having a desired activity are compartmentalised into microcapsules and then transcribed and/or translated to produce their respective gene products (RNA or protein) within the microcapsules. Genetic elements which produce gene product having desired activity are subsequently sorted. This approach selects gene products of interest by detecting the desired activity by a variety of means.

B. Library Construction.

Libraries intended for selection, may be constructed using techniques known in the art, for example as set forth above, or may be purchased from commercial sources. Libraries which are useful in the present invention are described, for example, in WO99/20749. Once a vector system is chosen and one or more nucleic acid sequences encoding polypeptides of interest are cloned into the library vector, one may generate diversity within the cloned molecules by undertaking mutagenesis prior to expression; alternatively, the encoded proteins may be expressed and selected, as described above, before mutagenesis and additional rounds of selection are performed. Mutagenesis of nucleic acid sequences encoding structurally optimised polypeptides is carried out by standard molecular methods. Of particular use is the polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, (Mullis and Faloona (1987) *Methods Enzymol.*, **155**: 335, herein incorporated by reference). PCR, which uses multiple cycles of DNA replication catalysed by a thermostable, DNA-dependent DNA polymerase to amplify the target sequence of interest, is well known in the art. The construction of various antibody libraries has been discussed in Winter *et al.* (1994) Ann. Rev. Immunology 12, 433-55, and references cited therein.

PCR is performed using template DNA (at least 1fg; more usefully, 1-1000 ng) and at least 25 pmol of oligonucleotide primers; it may be advantageous to use a larger amount of primer when the primer pool is heavily heterogeneous, as each sequence is represented by only a small fraction of the molecules of the pool, and amounts become limiting in the later amplification cycles. A typical reaction mixture includes: 2μl of DNA, 25 pmol of

oligonucleotide primer, 2.5 µl of 10X PCR buffer 1 (Perkin-Elmer, Foster City, CA), 0.4 µl of 1.25 µM dNTP, 0.15 µl (or 2.5 units) of Taq DNA polymerase (Perkin Elmer, Foster City, CA) and deionized water to a total volume of 25 µl. Mineral oil is overlaid and the PCR is performed using a programmable thermal cycler. The length and temperature of each step of a PCR cycle, as well as the number of cycles, is adjusted in accordance to the stringency requirements in effect. Annealing temperature and timing are determined both by the efficiency with which a primer is expected to anneal to a template and the degree of mismatch that is to be tolerated; obviously, when nucleic acid molecules are simultaneously amplified and mutagenised, mismatch is required, at least in the first round of synthesis. The ability to optimise the stringency of primer annealing conditions is well within the knowledge of one of moderate skill in the art. An annealing temperature of between 30 °C and 72 °C is used. Initial denaturation of the template molecules normally occurs at between 92°C and 99°C for 4 minutes, followed by 20-40 cycles consisting of denaturation (94-99°C for 15 seconds to 1 minute), annealing (temperature determined as discussed above; 1-2 minutes), and extension (72°C for 1-5 minutes, depending on the length of the amplified product). Final extension is generally for 4 minutes at 72°C, and may be followed by an indefinite (0-24 hour) step at 4°C.

C. Combining single variable domains

Domains useful in the invention, once selected, may be combined by a variety of methods known in the art, including covalent and non-covalent methods.

Preferred methods include the use of polypeptide linkers, as described, for example, in connection with scFv molecules (Bird *et al.*, (1988) Science 242:423-426). Discussion of suitable linkers is provided in *Bird et al.* Science 242, 423-426; *Hudson et al* , Journal Immunol Methods 231 (1999) 177-189; *Hudson et al*, Proc Nat Acad Sci USA 85, 5879-5883. Linkers are preferably flexible, allowing the two single domains to interact. One linker example is a $(Gly_4\ Ser)_n$ linker, where n=1 to 8, eg, 2, 3 or 4. The linkers used in diabodies, which are less flexible, may also be employed (Holliger *et al.*, (1993) PNAS (USA) 90:6444-6448).

Variable domains may be combined using methods other than linkers. For example, the use of disulphide bridges, provided through naturally-occurring or engineered cysteine residues, may be exploited to stabilise V_H-V_H, V_L-V_L or V_H-V_L dimers (Reiter *et al.*, (1994) Protein Eng. 7:697-704) or by remodelling the interface between the variable domains to improve the "fit" and thus the stability of interaction (Ridgeway *et al.*, (1996) Protein Eng. 7:617-621; Zhu *et al.*, (1997) Protein Science 6:781-788).

Other techniques for joining or stabilising variable domains of immunoglobulins, and in particular antibody V_H domains, may be employed as appropriate.

In accordance with the present invention, dual specific ligands can be in "closed" conformations in solution. A "closed" configuration is that in which the two domains (for example V_H and V_L) are present in associated form, such as that of an associated V_H-V_L pair which forms an antibody binding site. For example, scFv may be in a closed conformation, depending on the arrangement of the linker used to link the V_H and V_L domains. If this is sufficiently flexible to allow the domains to associate, or rigidly holds them in the associated position, it is likely that the domains will adopt a closed conformation.

Similarly, V_H domain pairs and V_L domain pairs may exist in a closed conformation. Generally, this will be a function of close association of the domains, such as by a rigid linker, in the ligand molecule. Ligands in a closed conformation will be unable to bind both the molecule which increases the half-life of the ligand and a second target molecule. Thus, the ligand will typically only bind the second target molecule on dissociation from the molecule which increases the half-life of the ligand.

Ligands according to the invention may moreover be in an open conformation. In such a conformation, the ligands will be able to simultaneously bind both the molecule which increases the half-life of the ligand and the second target molecule. Typically, variable domains in an open configuration are (in the case of V_H-V_L pairs) held far enough apart for the domains not to interact and form an antibody binding site and not to compete for binding to their respective epitopes. In the case of V_H/V_H or V_L/V_L dimers, the domains

are not forced together by rigid linkers. Naturally, such domain pairings will not compete for antigen binding or form an antibody binding site.

Fab fragments and whole antibodies will exist primarily in the closed conformation, although it will be appreciated that open and closed dual specific ligands are likely to exist in a variety of equilibria under different circumstances. Binding of the ligand to a target is likely to shift the balance of the equilibrium towards the open configuration. Thus, certain ligands according to the invention can exist in two conformations in solution, one of which (the open form) can bind two antigens or epitopes independently, whilst the alternative conformation (the closed form) can only bind one antigen or epitope; antigens or epitopes thus compete for binding to the ligand in this conformation.

Although the open form of the dual specific ligand may thus exist in equilibrium with the closed form solution, it is envisaged that the equilibrium will favour the closed form; moreover, the open form can be sequestered by target binding into a closed conformation. Preferably, therefore, certain dual specific ligands of the invention are present in an equilibrium between two (open and closed) conformations.

Dual specific ligands according to the invention may be modified in order to favour an open or closed conformation. For example, stabilisation of V_H-V_L interactions with disulphide bonds stabilises the closed conformation. Moreover, linkers used to join the domains, including V_H domain and V_L domain pairs, may be constructed such that the open from is favoured; for example, the linkers may sterically hinder the association of the domains, such as by incorporation of large amino acid residues in opportune locations, or the designing of a suitable rigid structure which will keep the domains physically spaced apart.

D. Characterisation of the dual-specific ligand.

The binding of the dual-specific ligand to its specific antigens or epitopes can be tested by methods which will be familiar to those skilled in the art and include ELISA. In a preferred embodiment of the invention binding is tested using monoclonal phage ELISA.

Phage ELISA may be performed according to any suitable procedure: an exemplary protocol is set forth below.

Populations of phage produced at each round of selection can be screened for binding by ELISA to the selected antigen or epitope, to identify "polyclonal" phage antibodies. Phage from single infected bacterial colonies from these populations can then be screened by ELISA to identify "monoclonal" phage antibodies. It is also desirable to screen soluble antibody fragments for binding to antigen or epitope, and this can also be undertaken by ELISA using reagents, for example, against a C- or N-terminal tag (see for example Winter *et al.* (1994) Ann. Rev. Immunology 12, 433-55 and references cited therein.

The diversity of the selected phage monoclonal antibodies may also be assessed by gel electrophoresis of PCR products (Marks *et al.* 1991, *supra*; Nissim *et al.* 1994 *supra*), probing (Tomlinson *et al.*, 1992) J. Mol. Biol. 227, 776) or by sequencing of the vector DNA.

E. Structure of 'Dual-specific ligands'.

As described above, an antibody is herein defined as an antibody (for example IgG, IgM, IgA, IgA, IgE) or fragment (Fab, Fv, disulphide linked Fv, scFv, diabody) which comprises at least one heavy and a light chain variable domain, at least two heavy chain variable domains or at least two light chain variable domains. It may be at least partly derived from any species naturally producing an antibody, or created by recombinant DNA technology; whether isolated from serum, B-cells, hybridomas, transfectomas, yeast or bacteria).

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the dual-specific ligand comprises at least one single heavy chain variable domain of an antibody and one single light chain variable domain of an antibody, or two single heavy or light chain variable domains. For example, the ligand may comprise a V_H/V_L pair, a pair of V_H domains or a pair of V_L domains.

The first and the second variable domains of such a ligand may be on the same polypeptide chain. Alternatively they may be on separate polypeptide chains. In the case

that they are on the same polypeptide chain they may be linked by a linker, which is preferentially a peptide sequence, as described above.

The first and second variable domains may be covalently or non-covalently associated. In the case that they are covalently associated, the covalent bonds may be disulphide bonds.

In the case that the variable domains are selected from V-gene repertoires selected for instance using phage display technology as herein described, then these variable domains comprise a universal framework region, such that is they may be recognised by a specific generic ligand as herein defined. The use of universal frameworks, generic ligands and the like is described in WO99/20749.

Where V-gene repertoires are used variation in polypeptide sequence is preferably located within the structural loops of the variable domains. The polypeptide sequences of either variable domain may be altered by DNA shuffling or by mutation in order to enhance the interaction of each variable domain with its complementary pair.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the 'dual-specific ligand' is a single chain Fv fragment. In an alternative embodiment of the invention, the 'dual-specific ligand' consists of a Fab format.

In a further aspect, the present invention provides nucleic acid encoding at least a 'dual-specific ligand' as herein defined.

One skilled in the art will appreciate that, depending on the aspect of the invention, both antigens or epitopes may bind simultaneously to the same antibody molecule. Alternatively, they may compete for binding to the same antibody molecule. For example, where both epitopes are bound simultaneously, both variable domains of a dual specific ligand are able to independently bind their target epitopes. Where the domains compete, the one variable domain is capable of binding its target, but not at the same time as the other variable domain binds its cognate target; or the first variable domain is capable of binding its target, but not at the same time as the second variable domain binds its cognate target.

The variable regions may be derived from antibodies directed against target antigens or epitopes. Alternatively they may be derived from a repertoire of single antibody domains such as those expressed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage. Selection may be performed as described below.

In general, the nucleic acid molecules and vector constructs required for the performance of the present invention may be constructed and manipulated as set forth in standard laboratory manuals, such as Sambrook *et al.* (1989) *Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor, USA.

The manipulation of nucleic acids useful in the present invention is typically carried out in recombinant vectors.

Thus in a further aspect, the present invention provides a vector comprising nucleic acid encoding at least a 'dual-specific ligand' as herein defined.

As used herein, vector refers to a discrete element that is used to introduce heterologous DNA into cells for the expression and/or replication thereof. Methods by which to select or construct and, subsequently, use such vectors are well known to one of moderate skill in the art. Numerous vectors are publicly available, including bacterial plasmids, bacteriophage, artificial chromosomes and episomal vectors. Such vectors may be used for simple cloning and mutagenesis; alternatively gene expression vector is employed. A vector of use according to the invention may be selected to accommodate a polypeptide coding sequence of a desired size, typically from 0.25 kilobase (kb) to 40 kb or more in length A suitable host cell is transformed with the vector after *in vitro* cloning manipulations. Each vector contains various functional components, which generally include a cloning (or "polylinker") site, an origin of replication and at least one selectable marker gene. If given vector is an expression vector, it additionally possesses one or more of the following: enhancer element, promoter, transcription termination and signal sequences, each positioned in the vicinity of the cloning site, such that they are operatively linked to the gene encoding a ligand according to the invention.

Both cloning and expression vectors generally contain nucleic acid sequences that enable the vector to replicate in one or more selected host cells. Typically in cloning vectors, this sequence is one that enables the vector to replicate independently of the host chromosomal DNA and includes origins of replication or autonomously replicating sequences. Such sequences are well known for a variety of bacteria, yeast and viruses. The origin of replication from the plasmid pBR322 is suitable for most Gram-negative bacteria, the 2 micron plasmid origin is suitable for yeast, and various viral origins (e.g. SV 40, adenovirus) are useful for cloning vectors in mammalian cells. Generally, the origin of replication is not needed for mammalian expression vectors unless these are used in mammalian cells able to replicate high levels of DNA, such as COS cells.

Advantageously, a cloning or expression vector may contain a selection gene also referred to as selectable marker. This gene encodes a protein necessary for the survival or growth of transformed host cells grown in a selective culture medium. Host cells not transformed with the vector containing the selection gene will therefore not survive in the culture medium. Typical selection genes encode proteins that confer resistance to antibiotics and other toxins, e.g. ampicillin, neomycin, methotrexate or tetracycline, complement auxotrophic deficiencies, or supply critical nutrients not available in the growth media.

Since the replication of vectors encoding a ligand according to the present invention is most conveniently performed in *E. coli*, an *E. coli*-selectable marker, for example, the β-lactamase gene that confers resistance to the antibiotic ampicillin, is of use. These can be obtained from *E. coli* plasmids, such as pBR322 or a pUC plasmid such as pUC18 or pUC19.

Expression vectors usually contain a promoter that is recognised by the host organism and is operably linked to the coding sequence of interest. Such a promoter may be inducible or constitutive. The term "operably linked" refers to a juxtaposition wherein the components described are in a relationship permitting them to function in their intended manner. A control sequence "operably linked" to a coding sequence is ligated in such a way that expression of the coding sequence is achieved under conditions compatible with the control sequences.

Promoters suitable for use with prokaryotic hosts include, for example, the β-lactamase and lactose promoter systems, alkaline phosphatase, the tryptophan (trp) promoter system and hybrid promoters such as the tac promoter. Promoters for use in bacterial systems will also generally contain a Shine-Delgarno sequence operably linked to the coding sequence.

The preferred vectors are expression vectors that enables the expression of a nucleotide sequence corresponding to a polypeptide library member. Thus, selection with the first and/or second antigen or epitope can be performed by separate propagation and expression of a single clone expressing the polypeptide library member or by use of any selection display system. As described above, the preferred selection display system is bacteriophage display. Thus, phage or phagemid vectors may be used. The preferred vectors are phagemid vectors which have an *E. coli.* origin of replication (for double stranded replication) and also a phage origin of replication (for production of single-stranded DNA). The manipulation and expression of such vectors is well known in the art (Hoogenboom and Winter (1992) supra; Nissim *et al.* (1994) supra). Briefly, the vector contains a β-lactamase gene to confer selectivity on the phagemid and a lac promoter upstream of a expression cassette that consists (N to C terminal) of a pelB leader sequence (which directs the expressed polypeptide to the periplasmic space), a multiple cloning site (for cloning the nucleotide version of the library member), optionally, one or more peptide tag (for detection), optionally, one or more TAG stop codon and the phage protein pIII. Thus, using various suppressor and non-suppressor strains of *E. coli* and with the addition of glucose, iso-propyl thio-β-D-galactoside (IPTG) or a helper phage, such as VCS M13, the vector is able to replicate as a plasmid with no expression, produce large quantities of the polypeptide library member only or produce phage, some of which contain at least one copy of the polypeptide-pIII fusion on their surface.

Construction of vectors encoding ligands according to the invention employs conventional ligation techniques. Isolated vectors or DNA fragments are cleaved, tailored, and religated in the form desired to generate the required vector. If desired, analysis to confirm that the correct sequences are present in the constructed vector can be performed in a known fashion. Suitable methods for constructing expression vectors,

preparing *in vitro* transcripts, introducing DNA into host cells, and performing analyses for assessing expression and function are known to those skilled in the art. The presence of a gene sequence in a sample is detected, or its amplification and/or expression quantified by conventional methods, such as Southern or Northern analysis, Western blotting, dot blotting of DNA, RNA or protein, *in situ* hybridisation, immunocytochemistry or sequence analysis of nucleic acid or protein molecules. Those skilled in the art will readily envisage how these methods may be modified, if desired.

Structure of closed conformation multispecific ligands

According to one aspect of the second configuration of the invention present invention, the two or more non-complementary epitope binding domains are linked so that they are in a closed conformation as herein defined. Advantageously, they may be further attached to a skeleton which may, as a alternative, or on addition to a linker described herein, facilitate the formation and/or maintenance of the closed conformation of the epitope binding sites with respect to one another.

(I) Skeletons

Skeletons may be based on immunoglobulin molecules or may be non-immunoglobulin in origin as set forth above. Preferred immunoglobulin skeletons as herein defined includes any one or more of those selected from the following: an immunoglobulin molecule comprising at least (i) the CL (kappa or lambda subclass) domain of an antibody; or (ii) the CH1 domain of an antibody heavy chain; an immunoglobulin molecule comprising the CH1 and CH2 domains of an antibody heavy chain; an immunoglobulin molecule comprising the CH1, CH2 and CH3 domains of an antibody heavy chain; or any of the subset (ii) in conjunction with the CL (kappa or lambda subclass) domain of an antibody. A hinge region domain may also be included.. Such combinations of domains may, for example, mimic natural antibodies, such as IgG or IgM, or fragments thereof, such as Fv, scFv, Fab or $F(ab')_2$ molecules. Those skilled in the art will be aware that this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

(II) Protein scaffolds

Each epitope binding domain comprises a protein scaffold and one or more CDRs which are involved in the specific interaction of the domain with one or more epitopes. Advantageously, an epitope binding domain according to the present invention comprises three CDRs. Suitable protein scaffolds include any of those selected from the group consisting of the following: those based on immunoglobulin domains, those based on fibronectin, those based on affibodies, those based on CTLA4, those based on chaperones such as GroEL, those based on lipocallin and those based on the bacterial Fc receptors SpA and SpD. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

F: Scaffolds for use in Constructing Dual Specific Ligands

i. Selection of the main-chain conformation

The members of the immunoglobulin superfamily all share a similar fold for their polypeptide chain. For example, although antibodies are highly diverse in terms of their primary sequence, comparison of sequences and crystallographic structures has revealed that, contrary to expectation, five of the six antigen binding loops of antibodies (H1, H2, L1, L2, L3) adopt a limited number of main-chain conformations, or canonical structures (Chothia and Lesk (1987) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **196**: 901; Chothia *et al.* (1989) *Nature*, **342**: 877). Analysis of loop lengths and key residues has therefore enabled prediction of the main-chain conformations of H1, H2, L1, L2 and L3 found in the majority of human antibodies (Chothia *et al.* (1992) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **227**: 799; Tomlinson *et al.* (1995) *EMBO J.*, **14**: 4628; Williams *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **264**: 220). Although the H3 region is much more diverse in terms of sequence, length and structure (due to the use of D segments), it also forms a limited number of main-chain conformations for short loop lengths which depend on the length and the presence of particular residues, or types of residue, at key positions in the loop and the antibody framework (Martin *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **263**: 800; Shirai *et al.* (1996) *FEBS Letters*, **399**: 1).

The dual specific ligands of the present invention are advantageously assembled from libraries of domains, such as libraries of V_H domains and/or libraries of V_L domains. Moreover, the dual specific ligands of the invention may themselves be provided in the

form of libraries. In one aspect of the present invention, libraries of dual specific ligands and/or domains are designed in which certain loop lengths and key residues have been chosen to ensure that the main-chain conformation of the members is known. Advantageously, these are real conformations of immunoglobulin superfamily molecules found in nature, to minimise the chances that they are non-functional, as discussed above. Germline V gene segments serve as one suitable basic framework for constructing antibody or T-cell receptor libraries; other sequences are also of use. Variations may occur at a low frequency, such that a small number of functional members may possess an altered main-chain conformation, which does not affect its function.

Canonical structure theory is also of use to assess the number of different main-chain conformations encoded by ligands, to predict the main-chain conformation based on ligand sequences and to chose residues for diversification which do not affect the canonical structure. It is known that, in the human V_κ domain, the L1 loop can adopt one of four canonical structures, the L2 loop has a single canonical structure and that 90% of human V_κ domains adopt one of four or five canonical structures for the L3 loop (Tomlinson *et al.* (1995) supra); thus, in the V_κ domain alone, different canonical structures can combine to create a range of different main-chain conformations. Given that the V_λ domain encodes a different range of canonical structures for the L1, L2 and L3 loops and that V_κ and V_λ domains can pair with any V_H domain which can encode several canonical structures for the H1 and H2 loops, the number of canonical structure combinations observed for these five loops is very large. This implies that the generation of diversity in the main-chain conformation may be essential for the production of a wide range of binding specificities. However, by constructing an antibody library based on a single known main-chain conformation it has been found, contrary to expectation, that diversity in the main-chain conformation is not required to generate sufficient diversity to target substantially all antigens. Even more surprisingly, the single main-chain conformation need not be a consensus structure - a single naturally occurring conformation can be used as the basis for an entire library. Thus, in a preferred aspect, the dual-specific ligands of the invention possess a single known main-chain conformation.

The single main-chain conformation that is chosen is preferably commonplace among molecules of the immunoglobulin superfamily type in question. A conformation is

commonplace when a significant number of naturally occurring molecules are observed to adopt it. Accordingly, in a preferred aspect of the invention, the natural occurrence of the different main-chain conformations for each binding loop of an immunoglobulin domain are considered separately and then a naturally occurring variable domain is chosen which possesses the desired combination of main-chain conformations for the different loops. If none is available, the nearest equivalent may be chosen. It is preferable that the desired combination of main-chain conformations for the different loops is created by selecting germline gene segments which encode the desired main-chain conformations. It is more preferable, that the selected germline gene segments are frequently expressed in nature, and most preferable that they are the most frequently expressed of all natural germline gene segments.

In designing dual specific ligands or libraries thereof the incidence of the different main-chain conformations for each of the six antigen binding loops may be considered separately. For H1, H2, L1, L2 and L3, a given conformation that is adopted by between 20% and 100% of the antigen binding loops of naturally occurring molecules is chosen. Typically, its observed incidence is above 35% (i.e. between 35% and 100%) and, ideally, above 50% or even above 65%. Since the vast majority of H3 loops do not have canonical structures, it is preferable to select a main-chain conformation which is commonplace among those loops which do display canonical structures. For each of the loops, the conformation which is observed most often in the natural repertoire is therefore selected. In human antibodies, the most popular canonical structures (CS) for each loop are as follows: H1 - CS 1 (79% of the expressed repertoire), H2 - CS 3 (46%), L1 - CS 2 of V_κ (39%), L2 - CS 1 (100%), L3 - CS 1 of V_κ (36%) (calculation assumes a κ:λ ratio of 70:30, Hood *et al.* (1967) *Cold Spring Harbor Symp. Quant. Biol.*, **48**: 133). For H3 loops that have canonical structures, a CDR3 length (Kabat *et al.* (1991) *Sequences of proteins of immunological interest*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) of seven residues with a salt-bridge from residue 94 to residue 101 appears to be the most common. There are at least 16 human antibody sequences in the EMBL data library with the required H3 length and key residues to form this conformation and at least two crystallographic structures in the protein data bank which can be used as a basis for antibody modelling (2cgr and 1tet). The most frequently expressed germline gene segments that this combination of canonical structures are the V_H segment 3-23 (DP-47),

the J_H segment JH4b, the V_κ segment O2/O12 (DPK9) and the J_κ segment $J_\kappa 1$. V_H segments DP45 and DP38 are also suitable. These segments can therefore be used in combination as a basis to construct a library with the desired single main-chain conformation.

Alternatively, instead of choosing the single main-chain conformation based on the natural occurrence of the different main-chain conformations for each of the binding loops in isolation, the natural occurrence of combinations of main-chain conformations is used as the basis for choosing the single main-chain conformation. In the case of antibodies, for example, the natural occurrence of canonical structure combinations for any two, three, four, five or for all six of the antigen binding loops can be determined. Here, it is preferable that the chosen conformation is commonplace in naturally occurring antibodies and most preferable that it observed most frequently in the natural repertoire. Thus, in human antibodies, for example, when natural combinations of the five antigen binding loops, H1, H2, L1, L2 and L3, are considered, the most frequent combination of canonical structures is determined and then combined with the most popular conformation for the H3 loop, as a basis for choosing the single main-chain conformation.

ii. Diversification of the canonical sequence

Having selected several known main-chain conformations or, preferably a single known main-chain conformation, dual specific ligands according to the invention or libraries for use in the invention can be constructed by varying the binding site of the molecule in order to generate a repertoire with structural and/or functional diversity. This means that variants are generated such that they possess sufficient diversity in their structure and/or in their function so that they are capable of providing a range of activities.

The desired diversity is typically generated by varying the selected molecule at one or more positions. The positions to be changed can be chosen at random or are preferably selected. The variation can then be achieved either by randomisation, during which the resident amino acid is replaced by any amino acid or analogue thereof, natural or synthetic, producing a very large number of variants or by replacing the resident amino

acid with one or more of a defined subset of amino acids, producing a more limited number of variants.

Various methods have been reported for introducing such diversity. Error-prone PCR (Hawkins *et al.* (1992) *J. Mol. Biol.*, 226: 889), chemical mutagenesis (Deng *et al.* (1994) *J. Biol. Chem.*, **269**: 9533) or bacterial mutator strains (Low *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **260**: 359) can be used to introduce random mutations into the genes that encode the molecule. Methods for mutating selected positions are also well known in the art and include the use of mismatched oligonucleotides or degenerate oligonucleotides, with or without the use of PCR. For example, several synthetic antibody libraries have been created by targeting mutations to the antigen binding loops. The H3 region of a human tetanus toxoid-binding Fab has been randomised to create a range of new binding specificities (Barbas *et al.* (1992) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **89**: 4457). Random or semi-random H3 and L3 regions have been appended to germline V gene segments to produce large libraries with unmutated framework regions (Hoogenboom & Winter (1992) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **227**: 381; Barbas *et al.* (1992) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **89**: 4457; Nissim *et al.* (1994) *EMBO J.*, **13**: 692; Griffiths *et al.* (1994) *EMBO J.*, **13**: 3245; De Kruif *et al.* (1995) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **248**: 97). Such diversification has been extended to include some or all of the other antigen binding loops (Crameri *et al.* (1996) *Nature Med.*, **2**: 100; Riechmann *et al.* (1995) *Bio/Technology*, **13**: 475; Morphosys, WO97/08320, supra).

Since loop randomisation has the potential to create approximately more than 10^{15} structures for H3 alone and a similarly large number of variants for the other five loops, it is not feasible using current transformation technology or even by using cell free systems to produce a library representing all possible combinations. For example, in one of the largest libraries constructed to date, 6×10^{10} different antibodies, which is only a fraction of the potential diversity for a library of this design, were generated (Griffiths *et al.* (1994) supra).

In a preferred embodiment, only those residues which are directly involved in creating or modifying the desired function of the molecule are diversified. For many molecules, the function will be to bind a target and therefore diversity should be concentrated in the

target binding site, while avoiding changing residues which are crucial to the overall packing of the molecule or to maintaining the chosen main-chain conformation.

Diversification of the canonical sequence as it applies to antibody domains

In the case of antibody dual-specific ligands, the binding site for the target is most often the antigen binding site. Thus, in a highly preferred aspect, the invention provides libraries of or for the assembly of antibody dual-specific ligands in which only those residues in the antigen binding site are varied. These residues are extremely diverse in the human antibody repertoire and are known to make contacts in high-resolution antibody/antigen complexes. For example, in L2 it is known that positions 50 and 53 are diverse in naturally occurring antibodies and are observed to make contact with the antigen. In contrast, the conventional approach would have been to diversify all the residues in the corresponding Complementarity Determining Region (CDR1) as defined by Kabat *et al.* (1991, supra), some seven residues compared to the two diversified in the library for use in to the invention. This represents a significant improvement in terms of the functional diversity required to create a range of antigen binding specificities.

In nature, antibody diversity is the result of two processes: somatic recombination of germline V, D and J gene segments to create a naive primary repertoire (so called germline and junctional diversity) and somatic hypermutation of the resulting rearranged V genes. Analysis of human antibody sequences has shown that diversity in the primary repertoire is focused at the centre of the antigen binding site whereas somatic hypermutation spreads diversity to regions at the periphery of the antigen binding site that are highly conserved in the primary repertoire (see Tomlinson *et al.* (1996) *J. Mol. Biol.*, **256**: 813). This complementarity has probably evolved as an efficient strategy for searching sequence space and, although apparently unique to antibodies, it can easily be applied to other polypeptide repertoires. The residues which are varied are a subset of those that form the binding site for the target. Different (including overlapping) subsets of residues in the target binding site are diversified at different stages during selection, if desired.

In the case of an antibody repertoire, an initial 'naive' repertoire is created where some, but not all, of the residues in the antigen binding site are diversified. As used herein in

this context, the term "naive" refers to antibody molecules that have no pre-determined target. These molecules resemble those which are encoded by the immunoglobulin genes of an individual who has not undergone immune diversification, as is the case with fetal and newborn individuals, whose immune systems have not yet been challenged by a wide variety of antigenic stimuli. This repertoire is then selected against a range of antigens or epitopes. If required, further diversity can then be introduced outside the region diversified in the initial repertoire. This matured repertoire can be selected for modified function, specificity or affinity.

The invention provides two different naive repertoires of binding domains for the construction of dual specific ligands, or a naïve library of dual specific ligands, in which some or all of the residues in the antigen binding site are varied. The "primary" library mimics the natural primary repertoire, with diversity restricted to residues at the centre of the antigen binding site that are diverse in the germline V gene segments (germline diversity) or diversified during the recombination process (junctional diversity). Those residues which are diversified include, but are not limited to, H50, H52, H52a, H53, H55, H56, H58, H95, H96, H97, H98, L50, L53, L91, L92, L93, L94 and L96. In the "somatic" library, diversity is restricted to residues that are diversified during the recombination process (junctional diversity) or are highly somatically mutated). Those residues which are diversified include, but are not limited to: H31, H33, H35, H95, H96, H97, H98, L30, L31, L32, L34 and L96. All the residues listed above as suitable for diversification in these libraries are known to make contacts in one or more antibody-antigen complexes. Since in both libraries, not all of the residues in the antigen binding site are varied, additional diversity is incorporated during selection by varying the remaining residues, if it is desired to do so. It shall be apparent to one skilled in the art that any subset of any of these residues (or additional residues which comprise the antigen binding site) can be used for the initial and/or subsequent diversification of the antigen binding site.

In the construction of libraries for use in the invention, diversification of chosen positions is typically achieved at the nucleic acid level, by altering the coding sequence which specifies the sequence of the polypeptide such that a number of possible amino acids (all 20 or a subset thereof) can be incorporated at that position. Using the IUPAC nomenclature, the most versatile codon is NNK, which encodes all amino acids as well as

the TAG stop codon. The NNK codon is preferably used in order to introduce the required diversity. Other codons which achieve the same ends are also of use, including the NNN codon, which leads to the production of the additional stop codons TGA and TAA.

A feature of side-chain diversity in the antigen binding site of human antibodies is a pronounced bias which favours certain amino acid residues. If the amino acid composition of the ten most diverse positions in each of the V_H, V_κ and V_λ regions are summed, more than 76% of the side-chain diversity comes from only seven different residues, these being, serine (24%), tyrosine (14%), asparagine (11%), glycine (9%), alanine (7%), aspartate (6%) and threonine (6%). This bias towards hydrophilic residues and small residues which can provide main-chain flexibility probably reflects the evolution of surfaces which are predisposed to binding a wide range of antigens or epitopes and may help to explain the required promiscuity of antibodies in the primary repertoire.

Since it is preferable to mimic this distribution of amino acids, the distribution of amino acids at the positions to be varied preferably mimics that seen in the antigen binding site of antibodies. Such bias in the substitution of amino acids that permits selection of certain polypeptides (not just antibody polypeptides) against a range of target antigens is easily applied to any polypeptide repertoire. There are various methods for biasing the amino acid distribution at the position to be varied (including the use of tri-nucleotide mutagenesis, see WO97/08320), of which the preferred method, due to ease of synthesis, is the use of conventional degenerate codons. By comparing the amino acid profile encoded by all combinations of degenerate codons (with single, double, triple and quadruple degeneracy in equal ratios at each position) with the natural amino acid use it is possible to calculate the most representative codon. The codons (AGT)(AGC)T, (AGT)(AGC)C and (AGT)(AGC)(CT) - that is, DVT, DVC and DVY, respectively using IUPAC nomenclature - are those closest to the desired amino acid profile: they encode 22% serine and 11% tyrosine, asparagine, glycine, alanine, aspartate, threonine and cysteine. Preferably, therefore, libraries are constructed using either the DVT, DVC or DVY codon at each of the diversified positions.

G: Antigens capable of increasing ligand half-life

The dual specific ligands according to the invention are capable of binding to one or more molecules which can increase the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*. Typically, such molecules are polypeptides which occur naturally *in vivo* and which resist degradation or removal by endogenous mechanisms which remove unwanted material from the organism. For example, the molecule which increases the half-life of the organism may be selected from the following:

Proteins from the extracellular matrix; for example collagen, laminins, integrins and fibronectin. Collagens are the major proteins of the extracellular matrix. About 15 types of collagen molecules are currently known, found in different parts of the body, eg type I collagen (accounting for 90% of body collagen) found in bone, skin, tendon, ligaments, cornea, internal organs or type II collagen found in cartilage, invertebral disc, notochord, vitreous humour of the eye.

Proteins found in blood, including:

Plasma proteins such as fibrin, α-2 macroglobulin, serum albumin, fibrinogen A, fibrinogen B, serum amyloid protein A, heptaglobin, profilin, ubiquitin, uteroglobulin and β-2-microglobulin;

Enzymes and inhibitors such as plasminogen, lysozyme, cystatin C, alpha-1-antitrypsin and pancreatic trypsin inhibitor. Plasminogen is the inactive precursor of the trypsin-like serine protease plasmin. It is normally found circulating through the blood stream. When plasminogen becomes activated and is converted to plasmin, it unfolds a potent enzymatic domain that dissolves the fibrinogen fibers that entgangle the blood cells in a blood clot. This is called fibrinolysis.

Immune system proteins, such as IgE, IgG, IgM.

Transport proteins such as retinol binding protein, α-1 microglobulin.

Defensins such as beta-defensin 1, Neutrophil defensins 1,2 and 3.

Proteins found at the blood brain barrier or in neural tissues, such as melanocortin receptor, myelin, ascorbate transporter.

Transferrin receptor specific ligand-neuropharmaceutical agent fusion proteins (see US5977307);

brain capillary endothelial cell receptor, transferrin, transferrin receptor, insulin, insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF 1) receptor, insulin-like growth factor 2 (IGF 2) receptor, insulin receptor.

Proteins localised to the kidney, such as polycystin, type IV collagen, organic anion transporter K1, Heymann's antigen.

Proteins localised to the liver, for example alcohol dehydrogenase, G250.

Blood coagulation factor X
α1 antitrypsin
HNF 1α

Proteins localised to the lung, such as secretory component (binds IgA).

Proteins localised to the Heart, for example HSP 27. This is associated with dilated cardiomyopathy.

Proteins localised to the skin, for example keratin.

Bone specific proteins, such as bone morphogenic proteins (BMPs), which are a subset of the transforming growth factor β superfamily that demonstrate osteogenic activity. Examples include BMP-2, -4, -5, -6, -7 (also referred to as osteogenic protein (OP-1) and -8 (OP-2).

Tumour specific proteins, including human trophoblast antigen, herceptin receptor, oestrogen receptor, cathepsins eg cathepsin B (found in liver and spleen).

Disease-specific proteins, such as antigens expressed only on activated T-cells: including LAG-3 (lymphocyte activation gene), osteoprotegerin ligand (OPGL) see *Nature* **402**, 304–309; 1999, OX40 (a member of the TNF receptor family, expressed on activated T cells and the only costimulatory T cell molecule known to be specifically up-regulated in human T cell leukaemia virus type-I (HTLV-I)-producing cells.) See *J Immunol. 2000 Jul 1;165(1):263-70*; Metalloproteases (associated with arthritis/cancers), including CG6512 Drosophila, human paraplegin, human FtsH, human AFG3L2, murine ftsH; angiogenic growth factors, including acidic fibroblast growth factor (FGF-1), basic fibroblast growth factor (FGF-2), Vascular endothelial growth factor / vascular permeability factor (VEGF/VPF), transforming growth factor-a (TGF a), tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α), angiogenin, interleukin-3 (IL-3), interleukin-8 (IL-8), platelet-derived endothelial growth factor (PD-ECGF), placental growth factor (PlGF), midkine platelet-derived growth factor-BB (PDGF), fractalkine.

Stress proteins (heat shock proteins)

HSPs are normally found intracellularly. When they are found extracellularly, it is an indicator that a cell has died and spilled out its contents. This unprogrammed cell death (necrosis) only occurs when as a result of trauma, disease or injury and therefore *in vivo*, extracellular HSPs trigger a response from the immune system that will fight infection and disease. A dual specific which binds to extracellular HSP can be localised to a disease site.

Proteins involved in Fc transport

Brambell receptor (also known as FcRB)

This Fc receptor has two functions, both of which are potentially useful for delivery

The functions are

(1) The transport of IgG from mother to child across the placenta

(2) the protection of IgG from degradation thereby prolonging its serum half life of IgG. It is thought that the receptor recycles IgG from endosome.

See Holliger *et al*, Nat Biotechnol 1997 Jul;15(7):632-6.

H: Use of multispecific ligands according to the second configuration of the invention

Multispecific ligands according to the method of the second configuration of the present invention may be employed in in vivo therapeutic and prophylactic applications, in vitro and in vivo diagnostic applications, in vitro assay and reagent applications, and the like. For example antibody molecules may be used in antibody based assay techniques, such as ELISA techniques, according to methods known to those skilled in the art.

As alluded to above, the multispecific ligands according to the invention are of use in diagnostic, prophylactic and therapeutic procedures. Multispecific antibodies according to the invention are of use diagnostically in Western analysis and *in situ* protein detection by standard immunohistochemical procedures; for use in these applications, the ligands may be labelled in accordance with techniques known to the art. In addition, such antibody polypeptides may be used preparatively in affinity chromatography procedures, when complexed to a chromatographic support, such as a resin. All such techniques are well known to one of skill in the art.

Diagnostic uses of the closed conformation multispecific ligands according to the invention include homogenous assays for analytes which exploit the ability of closed conformation multispecific ligands to bind two targets in competition, such that two targets cannot bind simultaneously (a closed conformation), or alternatively their ability to bind two targets simultaneously (an open conformation).

A true homogenous immunoassay format has been avidly sought by manufacturers of diagnostics and research assay systems used in drug discovery and development. The main diagnostics markets include human testing in hospitals, doctor's offices and clinics, commercial reference laboratories, blood banks, and the home, non-human diagnostics (for example food testing, water testing, environmental testing, bio-defence, and veterinary testing), and finally research (including drug development; basic research and academic research).

At present all these markets utilise immunoassay systems that are built around chemiluminescent, ELISA, fluorescence or in rare cases radio-immunoassay technologies. Each of these assay formats requires a separation step (separating bound from un-bound reagents). In some cases, several separation steps are required. Adding these additional steps adds reagents and automation, takes time, and affects the ultimate outcome of the assays. In human diagnostics, the separation step may be automated, which masks the problem, but does not remove it. The robotics, additional reagents, additional incubation times, and the like add considerable cost and complexity. In drug development, such as high throughput screening, where literally millions of samples are tested at once, with very low levels of test molecule, adding additional separation steps can eliminate the ability to perform a screen. However, avoiding the separation creates too much noise in the read out. Thus, there is a need for a true homogenous format that provides sensitivities at the range obtainable from present assay formats. Advantageously, an assay possesses fully quantitative read-outs with high sensitivity and a large dynamic range. Sensitivity is an important requirement, as is reducing the amount of sample required. Both of these features are features that a homogenous system offers. This is very important in point of care testing, and in drug development where samples are precious. Heterogenous systems, as currently available in the art, require large quantities of sample and expensive reagents

Applications for homogenous assays include cancer testing, where the biggest assay is that for Prostate Specific Antigen, used in screening men for prostate cancer. Other applications include fertility testing, which provides a series of tests for women attempting to conceive including beta-hcg for pregnancy. Tests for infectious diseases, including hepatitis, HIV, rubella, and other viruses and microorganisms and sexually transmitted diseases. Tests are used by blood banks, especially tests for HIV, hepatitis A, B, C, non A non B. Therapeutic drug monitoring tests include monitoring levels of prescribed drugs in patients for efficacy and to avoid toxicity, for example digoxin for arrhythmia, and phenobarbital levels in psychotic cases; theophylline for asthma. Diagnostic tests are moreover useful in abused drug testing, such as testing for cocaine, marijuana and the like. Metabolic tests are used for measuring thyroid function, anaemia and other physiological disorders and functions.

The homogenous immunoassay format is moreover useful in the manufacture of standard clinical chemistry assays. The inclusion of immunoassays and chemistry assays on the same instrument is highly advantageous in diagnostic testing. Suitable chemical assays include tests for glucose, cholesterol, potassium, and the like.

A further major application for homogenous immunoassays is drug discovery and development: high throughput screening includes testing combinatorial chemistry libraries versus targets in ultra high volume. Signal is detected, and positive groups then split into smaller groups, and eventually tested in cells and then animals. Homogenous assays may be used in all these types of test. In drug development, especially animal studies and clinical trials heavy use of immunoassays is made. Homogenous assays greatly accelerate and simplify these procedures. Other Applications include food and beverage testing: testing meat and other foods for E. coli, salmonella, etc; water testing, including testing at water plants for all types of contaminants including E. coli; and veterinary testing.

In a broad embodiment, the invention provides a binding assay comprising a detectable agent which is bound to a closed conformation multispecific ligand according to the invention, and whose detectable properties are altered by the binding of an analyte to said closed conformation multispecific ligand. Such an assay may be configured in several different ways, each exploiting the above properties of closed conformation multispecific ligands.

The assay relies on the direct or indirect displacement of an agent by the analyte, resulting in a change in the detectable properties of the agent. For example, where the agent is an enzyme which is capable of catalysing a reaction which has a detectable end-point, said enzyme can be bound by the ligand such as to obstruct its active site, thereby inactivating the enzyme. The analyte, which is also bound by the closed conformation multispecific ligand, displaces the enzyme, rendering it active through freeing of the active site. The enzyme is then able to react with a substrate, to give rise to a detectable event. In an alternative embodiment, the ligand may bind the enzyme outside of the active site, influencing the conformation of the enzyme and thus altering its activity. For example,

the structure of the active site may be constrained by the binding of the ligand, or the binding of cofactors necessary for activity may be prevented.

The physical implementation of the assay may take any form known in the art. For example, the closed conformation multispecific ligand/enzyme complex may be provided on a test strip; the substrate may be provided in a different region of the test strip, and a solvent containing the analyte allowed to migrate through the ligand/enzyme complex, displacing the enzyme, and carrying it to the substrate region to produce a signal. Alternatively, the ligand/enzyme complex may be provided on a test stick or other solid phase, and dipped into an analyte/substrate solution, releasing enzyme into the solution in response to the presence of analyte.

Since each molecule of analyte potentially releases one enzyme molecule, the assay is quantitative, with the strength of the signal generated in a given time being dependent on the concentration of analyte in the solution.

Further configurations using the analyte in a closed conformation are possible. For example, the closed conformation multispecific ligand may be configured to bind an enzyme in an allosteric site, thereby activating the enzyme. In such an embodiment, the enzyme is active in the absence of analyte. Addition of the analyte displaces the enzyme and removes allosteric activation, thus inactivating the enzyme.

In the context of the above embodiments which employ enzyme activity as a measure of the analyte concentration, activation or inactivation of the enzyme refers to an increase or decrease in the activity of the enzyme, measured as the ability of the enzyme to catalyse a signal-generating reaction. For example, the enzyme may catalyse the conversion of an undetectable substrate to a detectable form thereof. For example, horseradish peroxidase is widely used in the art together with chromogenic or chemiluminescent substrates, which are available commercially. The level of increase or decrease of the activity of the enzyme may between 10% and 100%, such as 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80% or 90%; in the case of an increase in activity, the increase may be more than 100%, i.e. 200%, 300%, 500% or more, or may not be measurable as a percentage if the baseline activity of the inhibited enzyme is undetectable.

In a further configuration, the closed conformation multispecific ligand may bind the substrate of an enzyme/substrate pair, rather than the enzyme. The substrate is therefore unavailable to the enzyme until released from the closed conformation multispecific ligand through binding of the analyte. The implementations for this configuration are as for the configurations which bind enzyme.

Moreover, the assay may be configured to bind a fluorescent molecule, such as a fluorescein or another fluorophore, in a conformation such that the fluorescence is quenched on binding to the ligand. In this case, binding of the analyte to the ligand will displace the fluorescent molecule, thus producing a signal. Alternatives to fluorescent molecules which are useful in the present invention include luminescent agents, such as luciferin/luciferase, and chromogenic agents, including agents commonly used in immunoassays such as HRP.

Therapeutic and prophylactic uses of closed conformation multispecific ligands prepared according to the invention involve the administration of ligands according to the invention to a recipient mammal, such as a human. Multi-specificity can allow antibodies to bind to multimeric antigen with great avidity. Closed conformation multispecific antibodies can allow the cross-linking of two antigens, for example in recruiting cytotoxic T-cells to mediate the killing of tumour cell lines.

Substantially pure ligands or binding proteins thereof of at least 90 to 95% homogeneity are preferred for administration to a mammal, and 98 to 99% or more homogeneity is most preferred for pharmaceutical uses, especially when the mammal is a human. Once purified, partially or to homogeneity as desired, the ligands may be used diagnostically or therapeutically (including extracorporeally) or in developing and performing assay procedures, immunofluorescent stainings and the like (Lefkovite and Pernis, (1979 and 1981) Immunological Methods, Volumes I and II, Academic Press, NY).

The ligands or binding proteins thereof of the present invention will typically find use in preventing, suppressing or treating inflammatory states, allergic hypersensitivity, cancer, bacterial or viral infection, and autoimmune disorders (which include, but are not limited

to, Type I diabetes, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, Crohn's disease and myasthenia gravis).

In the instant application, the term "prevention" involves administration of the protective composition prior to the induction of the disease. "Suppression" refers to administration of the composition after an inductive event, but prior to the clinical appearance of the disease. "Treatment" involves administration of the protective composition after disease symptoms become manifest.

Animal model systems which can be used to screen the effectiveness of the antibodies or binding proteins thereof in protecting against or treating the disease are available. Methods for the testing of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) in susceptible mice are known in the art (Knight *et al.* (1978) *J. Exp. Med.*, **147**: 1653; Reinersten *et al.* (1978) *New Eng. J. Med.*, **299**: 515). Myasthenia Gravis (MG) is tested in SJL/J female mice by inducing the disease with soluble AchR protein from another species (Lindstrom *et al.* (1988) *Adv. Immunol.*, **42**: 233). Arthritis is induced in a susceptible strain of mice by injection of Type II collagen (Stuart *et al.* (1984) *Ann. Rev. Immunol.*, **42**: 233). A model by which adjuvant arthritis is induced in susceptible rats by injection of mycobacterial heat shock protein has been described (Van Eden *et al.* (1988) *Nature*, **331**: 171). Thyroiditis is induced in mice by administration of thyroglobulin as described (Maron *et al.* (1980) *J. Exp. Med.*, **152**: 1115). Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) occurs naturally or can be induced in certain strains of mice such as those described by Kanasawa *et al.* (1984) *Diabetologia*, **27**: 113. EAE in mouse and rat serves as a model for MS in human. In this model, the demyelinating disease is induced by administration of myelin basic protein (see Paterson (1986) *Textbook of Immunopathology*, Mischer *et al.*, eds., Grune and Stratton, New York, pp. 179-213; McFarlin *et al.* (1973) *Science*, **179**: 478: and Satoh *et al.* (1987) *J. Immunol.*, **138**: 179).

Generally, the present antibodies will be utilised in purified form together with pharmacologically appropriate carriers. Typically, these carriers include aqueous or alcoholic/aqueous solutions, emulsions or suspensions, any including saline and/or buffered media. Parenteral vehicles include sodium chloride solution, Ringer's dextrose, dextrose and sodium chloride and lactated Ringer's. Suitable physiologically-acceptable

adjuvants, if necessary to keep a polypeptide complex in suspension, may be chosen from thickeners such as carboxymethylcellulose, polyvinylpyrrolidone, gelatin and alginates.

Intravenous vehicles include fluid and nutrient replenishers and electrolyte replenishers, such as those based on Ringer's dextrose. Preservatives and other additives, such as antimicrobials, antioxidants, chelating agents and inert gases, may also be present (Mack (1982) *Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 16th Edition).

The ligands of the present invention may be used as separately administered compositions or in conjunction with other agents. These can include various immunotherapeutic drugs, such as cylcosporine, methotrexate, adriamycin or cisplatinum, and immunotoxins. Pharmaceutical compositions can include "cocktails" of various cytotoxic or other agents in conjunction with the ligands of the present invention, or even combinations of lignds according to the present invention having different specificities, such as ligands selected using different target antigens or epitopes, whether or not they are pooled prior to administration.

The route of administration of pharmaceutical compositions according to the invention may be any of those commonly known to those of ordinary skill in the art. For therapy, including without limitation immunotherapy, the selected ligands thereof of the invention can be administered to any patient in accordance with standard techniques. The administration can be by any appropriate mode, including parenterally, intravenously, intramuscularly, intraperitoneally, transdermally, *via* the pulmonary route, or also, appropriately, by direct infusion with a catheter. The dosage and frequency of administration will depend on the age, sex and condition of the patient, concurrent administration of other drugs, counterindications and other parameters to be taken into account by the clinician.

The ligands of this invention can be lyophilised for storage and reconstituted in a suitable carrier prior to use. This technique has been shown to be effective with conventional immunoglobulins and art-known lyophilisation and reconstitution techniques can be employed. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that lyophilisation and

reconstitution can lead to varying degrees of antibody activity loss (e.g. with conventional immunoglobulins, IgM antibodies tend to have greater activity loss than IgG antibodies) and that use levels may have to be adjusted upward to compensate.

The compositions containing the present ligands or a cocktail thereof can be administered for prophylactic and/or therapeutic treatments. In certain therapeutic applications, an adequate amount to accomplish at least partial inhibition, suppression, modulation, killing, or some other measurable parameter, of a population of selected cells is defined as a "therapeutically-effective dose". Amounts needed to achieve this dosage will depend upon the severity of the disease and the general state of the patient's own immune system, but generally range from 0.005 to 5.0 mg of ligand, e.g. antibody, receptor (e.g. a T-cell receptor) or binding protein thereof *per* kilogram of body weight, with doses of 0.05 to 2.0 mg/kg/dose being more commonly used. For prophylactic applications, compositions containing the present ligands or cocktails thereof may also be administered in similar or slightly lower dosages.

A composition containing a ligand or cocktail thereof according to the present invention may be utilised in prophylactic and therapeutic settings to aid in the alteration, inactivation, killing or removal of a select target cell population in a mammal. In addition, the selected repertoires of polypeptides described herein may be used extracorporeally or *in vitro* selectively to kill, deplete or otherwise effectively remove a target cell population from a heterogeneous collection of cells. Blood from a mammal may be combined extracorporeally with the ligands, e.g. antibodies, cell-surface receptors or binding proteins thereof whereby the undesired cells are killed or otherwise removed from the blood for return to the mammal in accordance with standard techniques.

I: Use of half-life enhanced dual-specific ligands according to the invention

Dual-specific ligands according to the method of the present invention may be employed in *in vivo* therapeutic and prophylactic applications, *in vivo* diagnostic applications and the like.

Therapeutic and prophylactic uses of dual-specific ligands prepared according to the invention involve the administration of ligands according to the invention to a recipient mammal, such as a human. Dual specific antibodies according to the invention comprise at least one specificity for a half-life enhancing molecule; one or more further specificities may be directed against target molecules. For example, a dual-specific IgG may be specific for four epitopes, one of which is on a half-life enhancing molecule. Dual-specificity can allow antibodies to bind to multimeric antigen with great avidity. Dual-specific antibodies can allow the cross-linking of two antigens, for example in recruiting cytotoxic T-cells to mediate the killing of tumour cell lines.

Substantially pure antibodies or binding proteins thereof of at least 90 to 95% homogeneity are preferred for administration to a mammal, and 98 to 99% or more homogeneity is most preferred for pharmaceutical uses, especially when the mammal is a human. Once purified, partially or to homogeneity as desired, the ligands may be used diagnostically or therapeutically (including extracorporeally) or in developing and performing assay procedures, immunofluorescent stainings and the like (Lefkovite and Pernis, (1979 and 1981) Immunological Methods, Volumes I and II, Academic Press, NY).

The ligands of the present invention will typically find use in preventing, suppressing or treating inflammatory states, allergic hypersensitivity, cancer, bacterial or viral infection, and autoimmune disorders (which include, but are not limited to, Type I diabetes, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, Crohn's disease and myasthenia gravis).

In the instant application, the term "prevention" involves administration of the protective composition prior to the induction of the disease. "Suppression" refers to administration of the composition after an inductive event, but prior to the clinical appearance of the disease. "Treatment" involves administration of the protective composition after disease symptoms become manifest.

Animal model systems which can be used to screen the effectiveness of the dual specific ligands in protecting against or treating the disease are available. Methods for the testing

of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) in susceptible mice are known in the art (Knight *et al.* (1978) *J. Exp. Med.*, **147**: 1653; Reinersten *et al.* (1978) *New Eng. J. Med.*, **299**: 515). Myasthenia Gravis (MG) is tested in SJL/J female mice by inducing the disease with soluble AchR protein from another species (Lindstrom *et al.* (1988) *Adv. Immunol.*, **42**: 233). Arthritis is induced in a susceptible strain of mice by injection of Type II collagen (Stuart *et al.* (1984) *Ann. Rev. Immunol.*, **42**: 233). A model by which adjuvant arthritis is induced in susceptible rats by injection of mycobacterial heat shock protein has been described (Van Eden *et al.* (1988) *Nature*, **331**: 171). Thyroiditis is induced in mice by administration of thyroglobulin as described (Maron *et al.* (1980) *J. Exp. Med.*, **152**: 1115). Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) occurs naturally or can be induced in certain strains of mice such as those described by Kanasawa *et al.* (1984) *Diabetologia*, **27**: 113. EAE in mouse and rat serves as a model for MS in human. In this model, the demyelinating disease is induced by administration of myelin basic protein (see Paterson (1986) *Textbook of Immunopathology*, Mischer *et al.*, eds., Grune and Stratton, New York, pp. 179-213; McFarlin *et al.* (1973) *Science*, **179**: 478: and Satoh *et al.* (1987) *J. Immunol.*, **138**: 179).

Dual specific ligands according to the invention able to bind to extracellular targets involved in endocytosis (e.g. Clathrin) enable dual specific ligands to be endocytosed, enabling another specificity able to bind to an intracellular target to be delivered to an intracellular environment. This strategy requires a dual specific ligand with physical properties that enable it to remain functional inside the cell. Alternatively, if the final destination intracellular compartment is oxidising, a well folding ligand may not need to be disulphide free.

Generally, the present dual specific ligands will be utilised in purified form together with pharmacologically appropriate carriers. Typically, these carriers include aqueous or alcoholic/aqueous solutions, emulsions or suspensions, any including saline and/or buffered media. Parenteral vehicles include sodium chloride solution, Ringer's dextrose, dextrose and sodium chloride and lactated Ringer's. Suitable physiologically-acceptable adjuvants, if necessary to keep a polypeptide complex in suspension, may be chosen from thickeners such as carboxymethylcellulose, polyvinylpyrrolidone, gelatin and alginates.

Intravenous vehicles include fluid and nutrient replenishers and electrolyte replenishers, such as those based on Ringer's dextrose. Preservatives and other additives, such as antimicrobials, antioxidants, chelating agents and inert gases, may also be present (Mack (1982) *Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 16th Edition).

The ligands of the present invention may be used as separately administered compositions or in conjunction with other agents. These can include various immunotherapeutic drugs, such as cylcosporine, methotrexate, adriamycin or cisplatinum, and immunotoxins. Pharmaceutical compositions can include "cocktails" of various cytotoxic or other agents in conjunction with the ligands of the present invention.

The route of administration of pharmaceutical compositions according to the invention may be any of those commonly known to those of ordinary skill in the art. For therapy, including without limitation immunotherapy, the ligands of the invention can be administered to any patient in accordance with standard techniques. The administration can be by any appropriate mode, including parenterally, intravenously, intramuscularly, intraperitoneally, transdermally, *via* the pulmonary route, or also, appropriately, by direct infusion with a catheter. The dosage and frequency of administration will depend on the age, sex and condition of the patient, concurrent administration of other drugs, counterindications and other parameters to be taken into account by the clinician.

The ligands of the invention can be lyophilised for storage and reconstituted in a suitable carrier prior to use. This technique has been shown to be effective with conventional immunoglobulins and art-known lyophilisation and reconstitution techniques can be employed. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that lyophilisation and reconstitution can lead to varying degrees of antibody activity loss (e.g. with conventional immunoglobulins, IgM antibodies tend to have greater activity loss than IgG antibodies) and that use levels may have to be adjusted upward to compensate.

The compositions containing the present ligands or a cocktail thereof can be administered for prophylactic and/or therapeutic treatments. In certain therapeutic applications, an adequate amount to accomplish at least partial inhibition, suppression, modulation, killing, or some other measurable parameter, of a population of selected cells is defined as

a "therapeutically-effective dose". Amounts needed to achieve this dosage will depend upon the severity of the disease and the general state of the patient's own immune system, but generally range from 0.005 to 5.0 mg of ligand *per* kilogram of body weight, with doses of 0.05 to 2.0 mg/kg/dose being more commonly used. For prophylactic applications, compositions containing the present ligands or cocktails thereof may also be administered in similar or slightly lower dosages.

A composition containing a ligand according to the present invention may be utilised in prophylactic and therapeutic settings to aid in the alteration, inactivation, killing or removal of a select target cell population in a mammal.

In addition, the selected repertoires of polypeptides described herein may be used extracorporeally or *in vitro* selectively to kill, deplete or otherwise effectively remove a target cell population from a heterogeneous collection of cells. Blood from a mammal may be combined extracorporeally with the ligands, e.g. antibodies, cell- surface receptors or binding proteins thereof whereby the undesired cells are killed or otherwise removed from the blood for return to the mammal in accordance with standard techniques.

The invention is further described, for the purposes of illustration only, in the following examples.

Example 1. Selection of a dual specific scFv antibody (K8) directed against human serum albumin (HSA) and β-galactosidase (β -gal)

This example explains a method for making a dual specific antibody directed against β-gal and HSA in which a repertoire of V_κ variable domains linked to a germline (dummy) V_H domain is selected for binding to β-gal and a repertoire of V_H variable domains linked to a germline (dummy) V_κ domain is selected for binding to HSA. The selected variable V_H HSA and V_κ β-gal domains are then combined and the antibodies selected for binding to β-gal and HSA. HSA is a half-life increasing protein found in human blood.

Four human phage antibody libraries were used in this experiment.

Library 1	Germline V_K/DVT V_H	8.46×10^7
Library 2	Germline V_K/NNK V_H	9.64×10^7
Library 3	Germline V_H/DVT V_K	1.47×10^8
Library 4	Germline V_H/NNK V_K	1.45×10^8

All libraries are based on a single human framework for V_H (V3-23/DP47 and J_H4b) and V_K (O12/O2/DPK9 and J_K1) with side chain diversity incorporated in complementarity determining regions (CDR2 and CDR3).

Library 1 and Library 2 contain a dummy V_K sequence, whereas the sequence of V_H is diversified at positions H50, H52, H52a, H53, H55, H56, H58, H95, H96, H97 and H98 (DVT or NNK encoded, respectively) (Figure 1). Library 3 and Library 4 contain a dummy V_H sequence, whereas the sequence of V_K is diversified at positions L50, L53, L91, L92, L93, L94 and L96 (DVT or NNK encoded, respectively) (Figure 1). The libraries are in phagemid pIT2/ScFv format (Figure 2) and have been preselected for binding to generic ligands, Protein A and Protein L, so that the majority of clones in the unselected libraries are functional. The sizes of the libraries shown above correspond to the sizes after preselection. Library 1 and Library 2 were mixed prior to selections on antigen to yield a single V_H/dummy V_K library and Library 3 and Library 4 were mixed to form a single V_K/dummy V_H library.

Three rounds of selections were performed on β-gal using V_K/dummy V_H library and three rounds of selections were performed on HSA using V_H/dummy V_K library. In the case of β-gal the phage titres went up from 1.1×10^6 in the first round to 2.0×10^8 in the third round. In the case of HSA the phage titres went up from 2×10^4 in the first round to 1.4×10^9 in the third round. The selections were performed as described by Griffith *et al.*, (1993), except that KM13 helper phage (which contains a pIII protein with a protease cleavage site between the D2 and D3 domains) was used and phage were eluted with 1 mg/ml trypsin in PBS. The addition of trypsin cleaves the pIII proteins derived from the

helper phage (but not those from the phagemid) and elutes bound scFv-phage fusions by cleavage in the c-myc tag (Figure 2), thereby providing a further enrichment for phages expressing functional scFvs and a corresponding reduction in background (Kristensen & Winter, Folding & Design 3: 321-328, Jul 9, 1998). Selections were performed using immunotubes coated with either HSA or β-gal at 100μg/ml concentration.

To check for binding, 24 colonies from the third round of each selection were screened by monoclonal phage ELISA. Phage particles were produced as described by Harrison *et al.*, Methods Enzymol. 1996;267:83-109. 96-well ELISA plates were coated with 100μl of HSA or β-gal at 10μg/ml concentration in PBS overnight at 4°C. A standard ELISA protocol was followed (Hoogenboom *et al.*, 1991) using detection of bound phage with anti-M13-HRP conjugate. A selection of clones gave ELISA signals of greater than 1.0 with 50μl supernatant.

Next, DNA preps were made from V_H/dummy V_K library selected on HSA and from V_K/dummy V_H library selected on β-gal using the QIAprep Spin Miniprep kit (Qiagen). To access most of the diversity, DNA preps were made from each of the three rounds of selections and then pulled together for each of the antigens. DNA preps were then digested with Sal*I*/Not*I* overnight at 37°C. Following gel purification of the fragments, V_K chains from the V_K/dummy V_H library selected on β-gal were ligated in place of a dummy V_K chain of the V_H/dummy V_K library selected on HSA creating a library of 3.3 x 10^9 clones.

This library was then either selected on HSA (first round) and β-gal (second round), HSA/β-gal selection, or on β-gal (first round) and HSA (second round), β-gal/HSA selection. Selections were performed as described above. In each case after the second round 48 clones were tested for binding to HSA and β-gal by the monoclonal phage ELISA (as described above) and by ELISA of the soluble scFv fragments. Soluble antibody fragments were produced as described by Harrison *et al.*, (1996), and standard ELISA protocol was followed Hoogenboom *et al.* (1991) Nucleic Acids Res., **19**: 4133, except that 2% Tween/PBS was used as a blocking buffer and bound scFvs were detected with Protein L-HRP. Three clones (E4, E5 and E8) from the HSA/β-gal selection and two

clones (K8 and K10) from the β-gal/HSA selection were able to bind both antigens. scFvs from these clones were PCR amplified and sequenced as described by Ignatovich *et al.*, (1999) J Mol Biol 1999 Nov 26;294(2):457-65, using the primers LMB3 and pHENseq. Sequence analysis revealed that all clones were identical. Therefore, only one clone encoding a dual specific antibody (K8) was chosen for further work (Figure 3).

Example 2. Characterisation of the binding properties of the K8 antibody.

Firstly, the binding properties of the K8 antibody were characterised by the monoclonal phage ELISA. A 96-well plate was coated with 100μl of HSA and β-gal alongside with alkaline phosphatase (APS), bovine serum albumin (BSA), peanut agglutinin, lysozyme and cytochrome c (to check for cross-reactivity) at 10μg/ml concentration in PBS overnight at 4°C. The phagemid from K8 clone was rescued with KM13 as described by Harrison *et al.*, (1996) and the supernatant (50μl) containing phage assayed directly. A standard ELISA protocol was followed (Hoogenboom *et al.*, 1991) using detection of bound phage with anti-M13-HRP conjugate. The dual specific K8 antibody was found to bind to HSA and β-gal when displayed on the surface of the phage with absorbance signals greater than 1.0 (Figure 4). Strong binding to BSA was also observed (Figure 4). Since HSA and BSA are 76% homologous on the amino acid level, it is not surprising that K8 antibody recognised both of these structurally related proteins. No cross-reactivity with other proteins was detected (Figure 4).

Secondly, the binding properties of the K8 antibody were tested in a soluble scFv ELISA. Production of the soluble scFv fragment was induced by IPTG as described by Harrison *et al.*, (1996). To determine the expression levels of K8 scFv, the soluble antibody fragments were purified from the supernatant of 50ml inductions using Protein A-Sepharose columns as described by Harlow and Lane, Antibodies: a Laboratory Manual, (1988) Cold Spring Harbor. OD_{280} was then measured and the protein concentration calculated as described by Sambrook *et al.*, (1989). K8 scFv was produced in supernatant at 19mg/l.

A soluble scFv ELISA was then performed using known concentrations of the K8 antibody fragment. A 96-well plate was coated with 100µl of HSA, BSA and β-gal at 10µg/ml and 100µl of Protein A at 1µg/ml concentration. 50µl of the serial dilutions of the K8 scFv was applied and the bound antibody fragments were detected with Protein L-HRP. ELISA results confirmed the dual specific nature of the K8 antibody (Figure 5).

To confirm that binding to β-gal is determined by the V_K domain and binding to HSA/BSA by the V_H domain of the K8 scFv antibody, the V_K domain was cut out from K8 scFv DNA by *SalI*/*NotI* digestion and ligated into a *SalI*/*NotI* digested pIT2 vector containing dummy V_H chain (Figures 1 and 2). Binding characteristics of the resulting clone K8V_K/dummy V_H were analysed by soluble scFv ELISA. Production of the soluble scFv fragments was induced by IPTG as described by Harrison *et al.*, (1996) and the supernatant (50µ) containing scFvs assayed directly. Soluble scFv ELISA was performed as described in Example 1 and the bound scFvs were detected with Protein L-HRP. The ELISA results revealed that this clone was still able to bind β-gal, whereas binding to BSA was abolished (Figure 6).

Example 3. Selection of single V_H domain antibodies antigens A and B and single V_K domain antibodies directed against antigens C and D.

This example describes a method for making single V_H domain antibodies directed against antigens A and B and single V_K domain antibodies directed against antigens C and D by selecting repertoires of virgin single antibody variable domains for binding to these antigens in the absence of the complementary variable domains.

Selections and characterisation of the binding clones is performed as described previously (see Example 5, PCT/GB 02/003014). Four clones are chosen for further work:

VH1 – Anti A V_H

VH2 – Anti B V_H

VK1 – Anti C V_K

VK2 – Anti D V_K

Example 4. Creation and characterisation of the dual specific ScFv antibodies (VH1/VH2 directed against antigens A and B and VK1/VK2 directed against antigens C and D).

This example demonstrates that dual specific ScFv antibodies (VH1/VH2 directed against antigens A and B and VK1/VK2 directed against antigens C and D) could be created by combining V_K and V_H single domains selected against respective antigens in a ScFv vector.

To create dual specific antibody VH1/VH2, VH1 single domain is excised from pIT1 vector (Figure 7) by *NcoI*/*Xho*I digestion and ligated into *NcoI*/*Xho*I digested pIT2 vector (Figure 7) to create VH1/pIT2. VH2 single domain is PCR amplified from pIT1 vector using primers to introduce *SalI* restriction site to the 5' end and *NotI* restriction site to the 3' end. The PCR product is then digested with *SalI*/*NotI* and ligated into *SalI*/*NotI* digested VH1/pIT2 to create VH1/VH2/pIT2.

VK1/VK2/pIT2 is created in a similar way. The dual specific nature of the produced VH1/VH2 ScFv and VK1/VK2 ScFv is tested in a soluble ScFv ELISA as described previously (see Example 6, PCT/GB 02/003014). Competition ELISA is performed as described previously (see Example 8, PCT/GB 02/003014).

Possible outcomes:

-VH1/VH2 ScFv is able to bind antigens A and B simultaneously

-VK1/VK2 ScFv is able to bind antigens C and D simultaneously

-VH1/VH2 ScFv binding is competitive (when bound to antigen A, VH1/VH2 ScFv cannot bind to antigen B)

-VK1/VK2 ScFv binding is competitive (when bound to antigen C, VK1/VK2 ScFv cannot bind to antigen D)

Example 5. Construction of dual specific VH1/VH2 Fab and VK1/VK2 Fab and analysis of their binding properties.

To create VH1/VH2 Fab, VH1 single domain is ligated into *NcoI/XhoI* digested CH vector (Figure 8) to create VH1/CH and VH2 single domain is ligated into *SalI/NotI* digested CK vector (Figure 9) to create VH2/CK. Plasmid DNA from VH1/CH and VH2/CK is used to co-transform competent *E. coli* cells as described previously (see Example 8, PCT/GB02/003014).

The clone containing VH1/CH and VH2/CK plasmids is then induced by IPTG to produce soluble VH1/VH2 Fab as described previously (see Example 8, PCT/GB 02/003014).

VK1/VK2 Fab is produced in a similar way.

Binding properties of the produced Fabs are tested by competition ELISA as described previously (see Example 8, PCT/GB 02/003014).

Possible outcomes:

-VH1/VH2 Fab is able to bind antigens A and B simultaneously

-VK1/VK2 Fab is able to bind antigens C and D simultaneously

-VH1/VH2 Fab binding is competitive (when bound to antigen A, VH1/VH2 Fab cannot bind to antigen B)

-VK1/VK2 Fab binding is competitive (when bound to antigen C, VK1/VK2 Fab cannot bind to antigen D)

Example 6. *In vitro* incorporation of the VH2/CK chain into a human monoclonal IgG antibody produced in mammalian cells.

This example explains a method for creating an antigen B binding IgG antibody molecule by combining *in vitro* an antigen B specific VH2/CK domain with a heavy chain of a complete antibody.

A monoclonal IgG antibody 94 of unknown specificity produced in human myeloma cell line was used in this experiment. The heavy chain of this antibody contains rearranged counterparts of the germline V_H gene DP-33 and J_H5a and the light chain contains rearranged counterparts of the germline V_K gene DPK9 and J_K2.

125 pmoles of IgG 94 was mixed with 690 pmoles of V_K/C_K C3HisMut (1:5.5 ratio) and incubated with 10mM DTT at room temperature for 30 minutes to reduce interchain disulphide bonds. The mixture was then dialysed overnight at 4°C against 1M acetic acid which acted as a denaturing agent and kept heavy and light chains of immunoglobulin apart. The dialysis buffer was then changed to PBS and the mixture was dialysed at 4°C for 3 days with 3 buffer changes to allow slow reassociation of the heavy and light chains. Since there was an excess of V_K/C_K C3HisMut domain, some V_K/C_K C3HisMut chains should combine with immunoglobulin heavy chains instead of the endogenous light chain. A control experiment with no V_K/C_K C3HisMut added to the IgG 94 was also set up and all stages were carried out as above.

After dialysis the mixtures were analysed for binding to BSA by ELISA. A 96-well plate was coated with 100µl of 10µg/ml BSA. Detection of IgG molecules with incorporated V_K/C_K C3HisMut domain and, therefore, able to bind BSA, was performed with A-HRP and Anti IgG-HRP (Fc specific). ELISA clearly demonstrated that V_K/C_K C3HisMut chains were combined with complementary heavy chains to create an IgG molecule specific to BSA. Not treated IgG 94 and V_K/C_K C3HisMut chains as well as control experiment gave negative results in this assay. Moreover, passing the dialysis mixture through Protein A-sepharose column to remove free V_K/C_K C3HisMut chains did not affect ELISA results.

Example 7. *In vitro* incorporation of the VH2/CK chain into a polyclonal IgG fraction from human sera.

This example demonstrates that VH2/CK chain could be combined *in vitro* with a repertoire of heavy chains from complete antibodies to create antigen B specific IgG molecules.

A polyclonal IgG fraction from human sera (Sigma) was used in this experiment to provide a repertoire of heavy chains. Polyclonal IgGs and V_K/C_K C3HisMut chains were treated as described in Example 6. Newly assembled IgG molecules were then tested for binding to BSA by ELISA (Example 6). ELISA demonstrated the presence of IgG molecules that were able to bind BSA.

All publications mentioned in the above specification, and references cited in said publications, are herein incorporated by reference. Various modifications and variations of the described methods and system of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Although the invention has been described in connection with specific preferred embodiments, it should be understood that the invention as claimed should not be unduly limited to such specific embodiments. Indeed, various modifications of the described modes for carrying out the invention which are obvious to those skilled in molecular biology or related fields are intended to be within the scope of the following claims.

Claims

1. A dual-specific ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain having a binding specificity to a first epitope or antigen and a second complementary immunoglobulin single variable domain having a binding activity to a second epitope or antigen, wherein one or both of said antigens or epitopes acts to increase the half-life of the ligand *in vivo* and wherein said first and second domains lack mutually complementary domains which share the same specificity, provided that neither of the first or second variable domains binds to a human serum albumin (HSA) epitope.

2. A dual-specific ligand according to claim 1, comprising at least one single heavy chain variable domain of an antibody and one complementary single light chain variable domain of an antibody such that the two regions are capable of associating to form a complementary VH/VL pair.

3. A dual specific ligand according to claim 2 wherein the V_H and V_L are provided by an antibody scFv fragment.

4. A dual-specific ligand according to claim 2 wherein the V_H and V_L are provided by an antibody Fab region.

5. A four chain IgG immunoglobulin comprising a dual specific ligand of claim 2.

6. A four chain IgG immunoglobulin according to claim 5, wherein said IgG comprises two dual specific ligands, said dual specific ligands being identical in their variable domains.

7. A four chain IgG immunoglobulin according to claim 5, wherein said IgG comprises two dual specific ligands, said dual specific ligands being different in their variable domains.

8. A ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin variable domain having a first antigen or epitope binding specificity and a second immunoglobulin variable domain having a second antigen or epitope binding specificity wherein one or both of said first and second variable domains bind to an antigen which increases the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*, and the variable domains are not complementary to one another.

9. A ligand according to claim 8 wherein the first and the second immunoglobulin variable domains are heavy chain variable domains (V_H).

10. A ligand according to claim 8 wherein the first and the second immunoglobulin variable domains are light chain variable domains (V_L).

11. A ligand according to claim any preceding claim, wherein the first and second epitopes bind independently, such that the dual specific ligand may simultaneously bind both the first and second epitopes or antigens.

12. A ligand according to claim 11, wherein the dual specific ligand comprises a first form and a second form in equilibrium in solution, wherein both epitopes or antigens bind to the first form independently but compete for binding to the second form.

13. A ligand according to any preceding claim wherein the variable regions are derived from immunoglobulins directed against said epitopes or antigens.

14. A ligand according to any preceding claim, wherein said first and second epitopes are present on separate antigens.

15. A ligand according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein said first and second epitopes are present on the same antigen.

16. A ligand according to any preceding claim comprising a variable domain that is derived from a repertoire of single antibody domains.

17. A ligand of claim 16 wherein said repertoire is displayed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage and wherein the single antibody domains are selected by binding of the bacteriophage repertoire to antigen.

18. A method of any preceding claim wherein the sequence of at least one variable domain is modified by mutation or DNA shuffling.

19. A dual-specific ligand according to any preceding claim wherein the variable regions are non-covalently associated.

20. A dual-specific ligand according to any one of claims 1 to 18 wherein the variable regions are covalently associated.

21. A dual-specific ligand according to claim 20 wherein the covalent association is mediated by disulphide bonds.

22. A dual specific ligand according to any preceding claim, which comprises a universal framework.

23. A dual specific ligand according to claim 22, wherein the universal framework comprises a V_H framework selected from the group consisting of DP47, DP45 and DP38; and/or the V_L framework is DPK9.

24. A dual specific ligand of according to any preceding claim which comprises a binding site for a generic ligand.

25. A method for producing a ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin single variable domain having a first binding specificity and a second single immunoglobulin single variable domain having a second binding specificity, one or both of the binding specificities being specific for a protein which increases the half-life of the ligand *in vivo*, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) selecting a first variable domain by its ability to bind to a first epitope,

(b) selecting a second variable region by its ability to bind to a second epitope,

(c) combining the variable regions; and

(d) selecting the ligand by its ability to bind to said first and second epitopes;

wherein, when said variable domains are complementary, neither of said domains is specific for HSA.

26. A method according to claim 25 wherein said first variable domain is selected for binding to said first epitope in absence of a complementary variable domain.

27. A method according to claim 25 wherein said first variable domain is selected for binding to said first epitope in the presence of a third complementary variable domain in which said third variable domain is different from said second variable domain.

28. Nucleic acid encoding at least a dual-specific ligand according to any one of claims 1 to 24.

29. A vector comprising nucleic acid according to claim 28.

30. A vector according to claim 29, further comprising components necessary for the expression of a dual-specific ligand.

31. A host cell transfected with a vector according to claim 30.

32. A method for producing a closed conformation multi-specific ligand comprising a first single epitope binding domain having a first epitope binding specificity and a non-complementary second epitope binding domain having a second epitope binding specificity, wherein the first and second binding specificities are capable of competing for epitope binding such that the closed conformation multi-specific ligand may not bind both epitopes simultaneously, said method comprising the steps of:

a) selecting a first epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a first epitope,

b) selecting a second epitope binding domain by its ability to bind to a second epitope,

c) combining the epitope binding domains such that the domains are in a closed conformation; and

d) selecting the closed conformation multispecific ligand by its ability to bind to said first second epitope and said second epitope, but not to both said first and second epitopes simultaneously.

33. A method according to claim 32 wherein the first and the second epitope binding domains are immunoglobulin variable heavy chain domains (V_H).

34. A method according to claim 32 wherein the first and the second immunoglobulin variable domains are immunoglobulin variable light chain domains (V_L).

35 A method according to any one of claims 32 to 34 wherein the immunoglobulin domains are derived from immunoglobulins directed against said epitopes.

36. A method according to any one of claims 32 to 35, wherein said first and second epitopes are present on separate antigens.

37. A method according to any one of claims 32 to 35, wherein said first and second epitopes are present on the same antigen.

38. A method according to any one of claims 32 to 37 wherein the variable domain is derived from a repertoire of single antibody domains.

39. A method of claim 38 wherein said repertoire is displayed on the surface of filamentous bacteriophage and wherein the single antibody domains are selected by binding of the bacteriophage repertoire to antigen.

40. A method of any one of claims 32 to 39 wherein the sequence of at least one immunoglobulin variable domain is modified by mutation or DNA shuffling.

41. A closed conformation multispecific ligand comprising a first epitope binding domain having a first epitope binding specificity and a non-complementary second

epitope binding domain having a second epitope binding specificity wherein the first and second binding specificities are capable of competing for epitope binding such that the closed conformation multi-specific ligand cannot bind both epitopes simultaneously.

42. A closed conformation multispecific ligand according to claim 41, obtainable by a method according to any one of claims 32 to 39.

43. A closed conformation multispecific ligand according to claim 41 or claim 42, comprising more than one single heavy chain variable domain of an antibody or more than one light chain variable domain of an antibody.

44. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to claim 43 wherein the V_H or V_L are provided by an antibody scFv fragment.

45. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to claim 44 wherein the V_H or V_L are provided by an antibody Fab region.

46. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to any one of claims 41 to 45 wherein the variable regions are non-covalently associated.

47. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to any one of claims 41 to 45 wherein the variable regions are covalently associated.

48. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to claim 47 wherein the covalent association is mediated by disulphide bonds.

49. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to any of claims 43 to 48 which comprises a universal framework.

50. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to claim 49, wherein the universal framework comprises a V_H framework selected from the group consisting of DP47, DP45 and DP38; or the V_L framework is DPK9.

51. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand of according to any one of claims 43 to 50 which comprises the binding site for a specific generic ligand.

52. A closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to any one of claims 41 to 51, wherein one specificity thereof is for an agent effective to increase the half life of the ligand.

53. A kit comprising a closed conformation multi-specific ligand according to any one of claims 41 to 52.

54. Nucleic acid encoding at least a closed conformation multispecific ligand according to any one of claims 41 to 52.

55. A vector comprising nucleic acid according to claim 54.

56. A vector according to claim 55, further comprising components necessary for the expression of a closed conformation multispecific ligand.

57. A host cell transfected with a vector according to claim 56.

58. A method for detecting the presence of a target molecule, comprising:
(a) providing a closed conformation multispecific ligand bound to an agent, said ligand being specific for the target molecule and the agent, wherein the agent which is bound by the ligand leads to the generation of a detectable signal on displacement from the ligand;
(b) exposing the closed conformation multispecific ligand to the target molecule; and
(c) detecting the signal generated as a result of the displacement of the agent.

59. A method according to claim 58, wherein the agent is an enzyme, which is inactive when bound by the closed conformation multispecific ligand.

60. A method according to claim 59, wherein the agent is the substrate for an enzyme

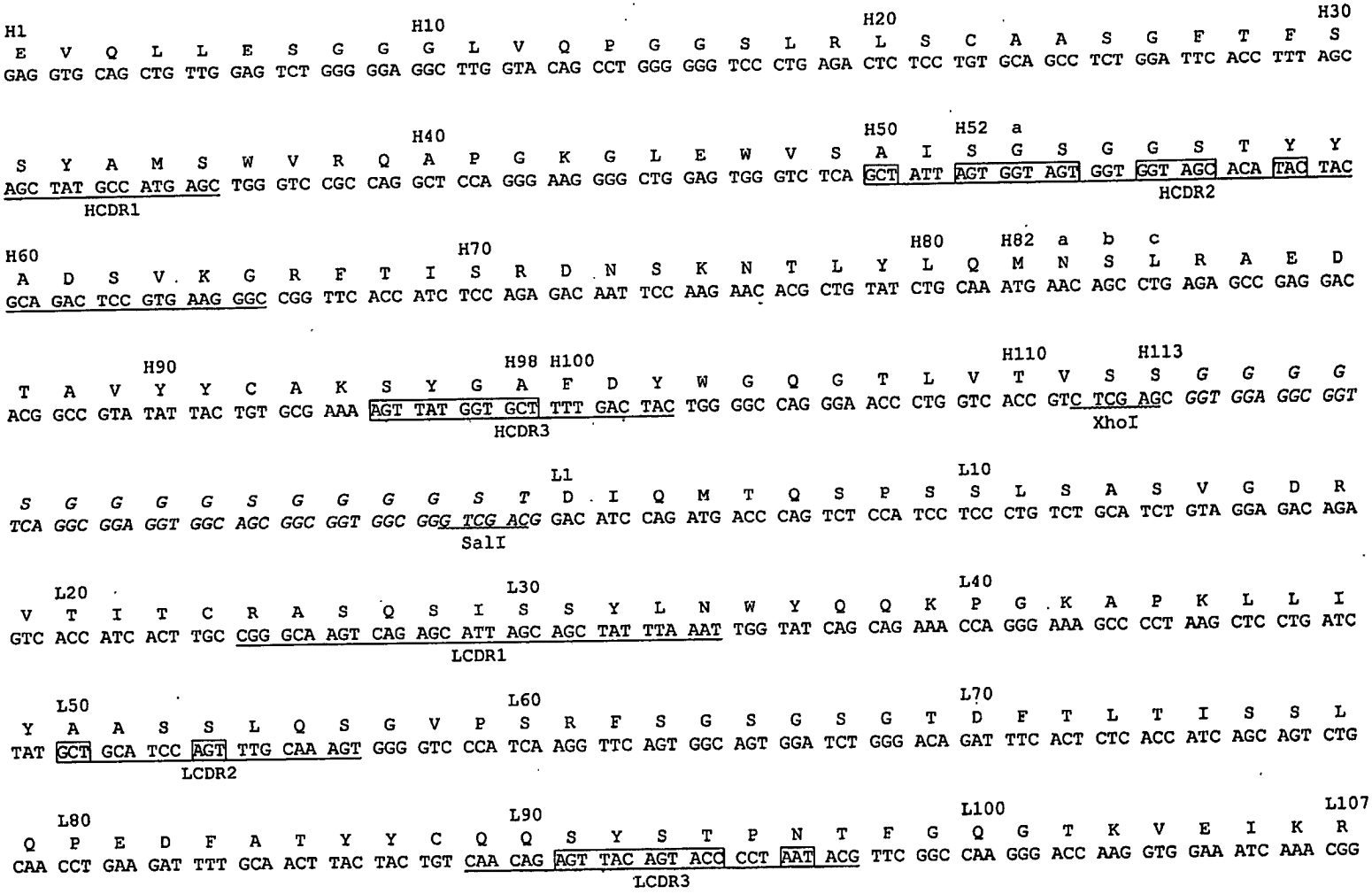
61. A method according to claim 60, wherein the agent is a fluorescent, luminescent or chromogenic molecule which is inactive or quenched when bound by the ligand.

62. A kit for performing a method according to any one of claims 58-61, comprising a closed conformation multispecific ligand capable of binding to a target molecule, and optionally an agent and buffers suitable therefor.

63. A homogenous immunoassay incorporating a method according to any one of claims 58-62.

Abstract

The invention provides a dual-specific ligand comprising a first immunoglobulin variable domain having a first binding specificity and a complementary or non-complementary immunoglobulin variable domain having a second binding specificity.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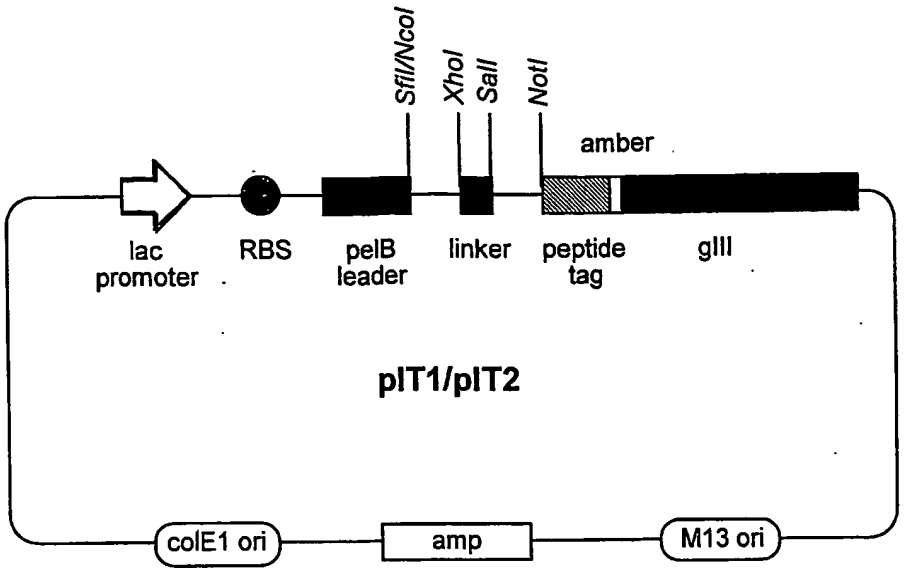
H40 H50 H52 a
S Y A M S W V R Q A P G K G L E W V S A I S G S G G S T Y Y
AGC TAT GCC ATG AGC TGG GTC CGC CAG GCT CCA GGG AAG GGG CTG GAG TGG GTC TCA GCT ATT AGT GGT AGT GGT GGT AGC ACA TAC TAC
HCDR1
HCDR2
H60 H70 H80 H82 a b c
A D S V K G R F T I S R D N S K N T L Y L Q M N S L R A E D
GCA GAC TCC GTG AAG GGC CGG TTC ACC ATC TCC AGA GAC AAT TCC AAG AAC ACG CTG TAT CTG CAA ATG AAC AGC CTG AGA GCC GAG GAC
H90 H98 H100 H110 H113
T A V Y Y C A K S Y G A F D Y W G Q G T L V T V S S G G G G
ACG GCC GTA TAT TAC TGT GCG AAA AGT TAT GGT GCT TTT GAC TAC TGG GGC CAG GGA ACC CTG GTC ACC GTC TCG AGC GGT GGA GGC GGT
HCDR3
XhoI
L1 L10
S G G G G S G G G G S T D I Q M T Q S P S S L S A S V G D R
TCA GGC GGA GGT GGC AGC GGC GGT GGC GGG TCG ACG GAC ATC CAG ATG ACC CAG TCT CCA TCC TCC CTG TCT GCA TCT GTA GGA GAC AGA
SalI
L20 L30 L40
V T I T C R A S Q S I S S Y L N W Y Q Q K P G K A P K L L I
GTC ACC ATC ACT TGC CGG GCA AGT CAG AGC ATT AGC AGC TAT TTA AAT TGG TAT CAG CAG AAA CCA GGG AAA GCC CCT AAG CTC CTG ATC
LCDR1
L50 L60 L70
Y A A S S L Q S G V P S R F S G S G S G T D F T L T I S S L
TAT GCT GCA TCC AGT TTG CAA AGT GGG GTC CCA TCA AGG TTC AGT GGC AGT GGA TCT GGG ACA GAT TTC ACT CTC ACC ATC AGC AGT CTG
LCDR2
L80 L90 L100 L107
Q P E D F A T Y Y C Q Q S Y S T P N T F G Q G T K V E I K R
CAA CCT GAA GAT TTT GCA ACT TAC TAC TGT CAA CAG AGT TAC AGT ACC CCT AAT ACG TTC GGC CAA GGG ACC AAG GTG GAA ATC AAA CGG
LCDR3

Figure 1



RBS

CAGGAAACAGCTATGACCATGATTACGCCAAGCTTGCATGCAAATTCTATTTCAAGGAGACAGTCATA ATG AAA TAC CTA

----------> M K Y L

LMB3

SfiI NcoI

TTG CCT ACG GCA GCC GCT GGA TTG TTA TTA CTC GCG GCC CAG CCG GCC ATG GCC GAG GTG TTT

L P T A A A G L L L L A A Q P A M A E V F

XhoI linker

GAC TAC TGG GGC CAG GGA ACC CTG GTC ACC GTC TCG AGC GGT GGA GGC GGT TCA GGC GGA GGT

D Y W G Q G T L V T V S S G G G G S G G G

SalI NotI

GGC AGC GGC GGT GGC GGG TCG ACG GAC ATC CAG ATG ACC CAG GCG GCC GCA GAA CAA AAA CTC

G S G G G G S T D I Q M T Q A A A E Q K L

<----------

link seq new

HIS-tag

CAT CAT CAT CAC CAT CAC GGG GCC GCA

H H H H H H G A A

(insertion in pIT2 only)

myc-tag *Gene III*

ATC TCA GAA GAG GAT CTG AAT GGG GCC GCA TAG ACT GTT GAA AGT TGT TTA GCA AAA CCT CAT

I S E E D L N G A A * T V E S C L A K P H

<----------

pHEN seq

Figure 2

V_H chains

	FR1			*CDR1*	*FR2*	*CDR2*	*FR3*			*CDR3*	*FR4*
	1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12345678901234567890123456789			12345	67890123456789	012a3456789012345	67890123456789012abc345678901234				567801	234567890123
V_H dummy	EVQLLESGGGLVQPGGSLRLSCAASGFTFS			SYAMS	WVRQAPGKGLEWVS	AISGSGGSTYYADSVKG	RFTISRDNSKNTLYLQMNSLRAEDTAVYYCAK			SYGAFDY	WGQGTLVTVSS	
K8	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	H-SPY-AN-R-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	GLRA---	----------
VH2	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	D-GAT-SK-G---P---	----------	----------	----------	----------	KVLT---	----------
VH4	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	R-NGP-*A-G-------	----------	----------	I---------	----------	HGAP---	----------
VHC11	----------	----------	----------	----N	----------	S-PAS-LH-R-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	PGLG---	----------
VHA10sd	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	D-ERT-Y*-R-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	KVLV---	----------
VHA1sd	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	E-SAN-SK-Q-------	-L--------	----------	----------	----------	KVLQ---	----------
VHA5sd	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	T-PAN-*V-R-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	SLLQ---	----------
VHC5sd	----------	----------	----------	-----	----------	D-AAT-SA-S-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	KILK---	----------
VHC11sd	----------	----------	S---	-----	----------	T-SSV-QS-R-------	----------	----------	----------	----------	NLMS---	----------

Figure 3

V_κ chains

	FR1		CDR1	FR2	CDR2	FR3			-CDR3	FR4
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	12345678901234567890123		45678901234	567890123456789	0123456	789012345678901234567890123456789			901234567	89012345678
V_κ dummy	DIQMTQSPSSLSASVGDRVTITC		RASQSISSYLN	WYQQKPGKAPKLLIY	AASSLQS	GVPSRFSGSGSGTDFTLTISSLQPEDFATYYC			QQSYSTPNT	FGQGTKVEIKR
K8	----------	----------	----------	----------	R--H---	----------	----------	----------	--PWRS-G-	----------
E5sd	----------	----------	-----V-----	----------	L--R---	----------	----------	----------	--NWWL-P-	----------
C3	----------	----------	----------	----------	*--L---	----------	----------	----------	--RVYD-L-	----------

Figure 3 (cont)

1.421
0.06
1.159
0.068
1.338
0.067
0.076

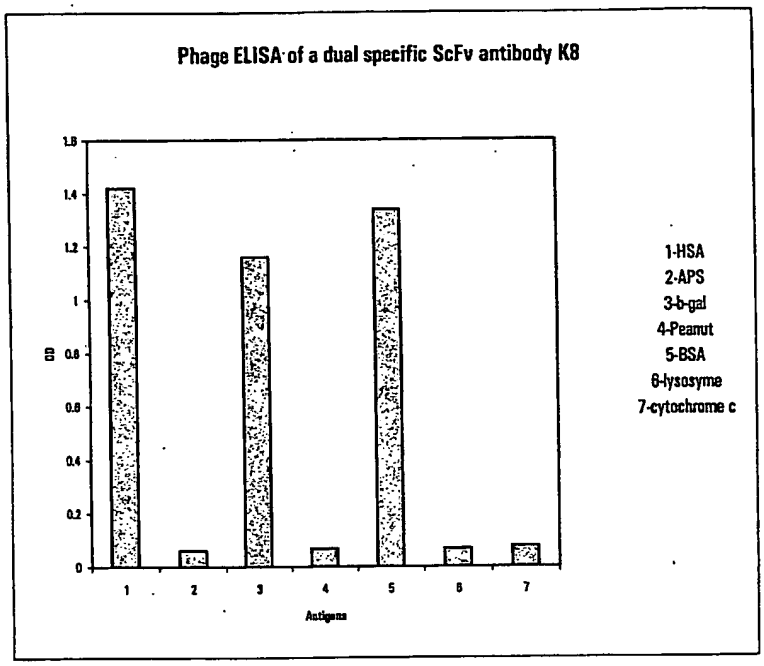


Figure 4

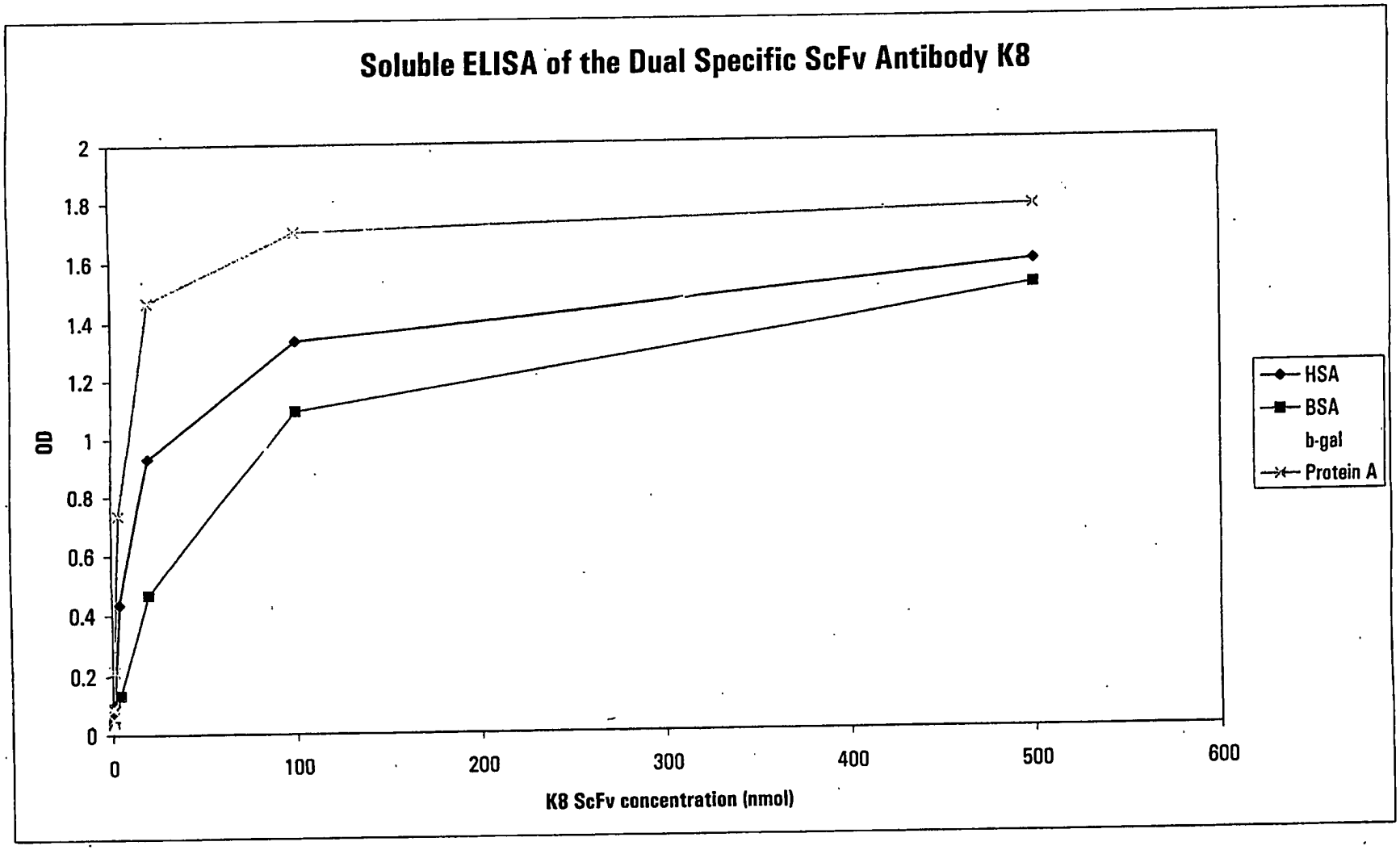

Soluble ELISA of the Dual Specific ScFv Antibody K8
OD
2
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
K8 ScFv concentration (nmol)
HSA
BSA
b-gal
Protein A

Figure 5

0.018
1.422
0.016
1.5

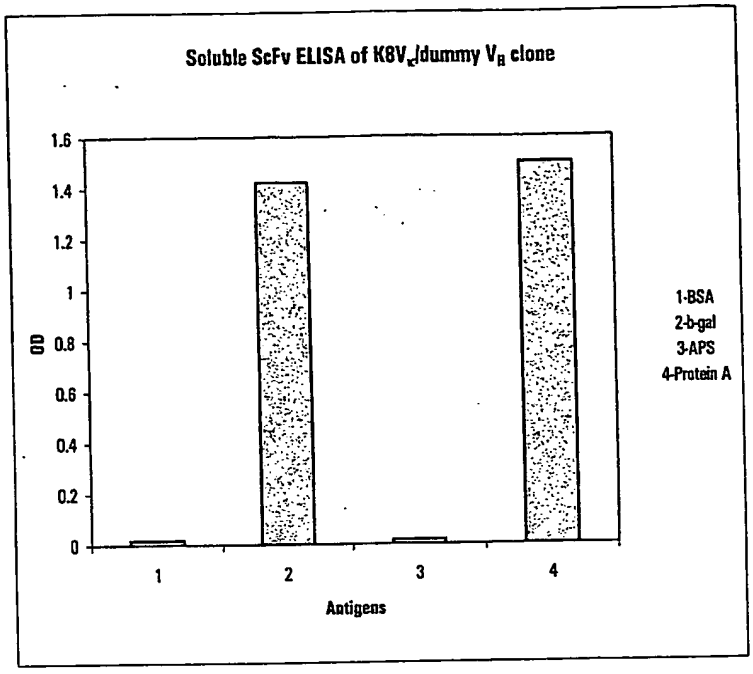
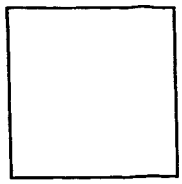


Figure 6



RBS

CAGGAAACAGCTATGACCATGATTACGCCAAGCTTGCATGCAAATTCTATTTCAAGGAGACAGTCATA ATG AAA TAC CTA
M K Y L

----------->
LMB3

SfiI NcoI

TTG CCT ACG GCA GCC GCT GGA TTG TTA TTA CTC GCG GCC CAG CCG GCC ATG GCC GAG GTG TTT
L P T A A A G L L L L A A Q P A M A E V F

XhoI *linker*

GAC TAC TGG GGC CAG GGA ACC CTG GTC ACC GTC TCG AGC GGT GGA GGC GGT TCA GGC GGA GGT
D Y W G Q G T L V T V S S G G G G S G G G

SalI NotI

GGC AGC GGC GGT GGC GGG TCG ACG GAC ATC CAG ATG ACC CAG GCG GCC GCA GAA CAA AAA CTC
G S G G G G S T D I Q M T Q A A A *E Q K L*

<----------
link seq new

HIS-tag

CAT CAT CAT CAC CAT CAC GGG GCC GCA
H H H H H H G A A
(insertion in pIT2 only)

myc-tag *Gene III*

ATC TCA GAA GAG GAT CTG AAT GGG GCC GCA TAG ACT GTT GAA AGT TGT TTA GCA AAA CCT CAT
I S E E D L N G A A * *T V E S C L A K P H*

<----------
pHEN seq

Figure 7

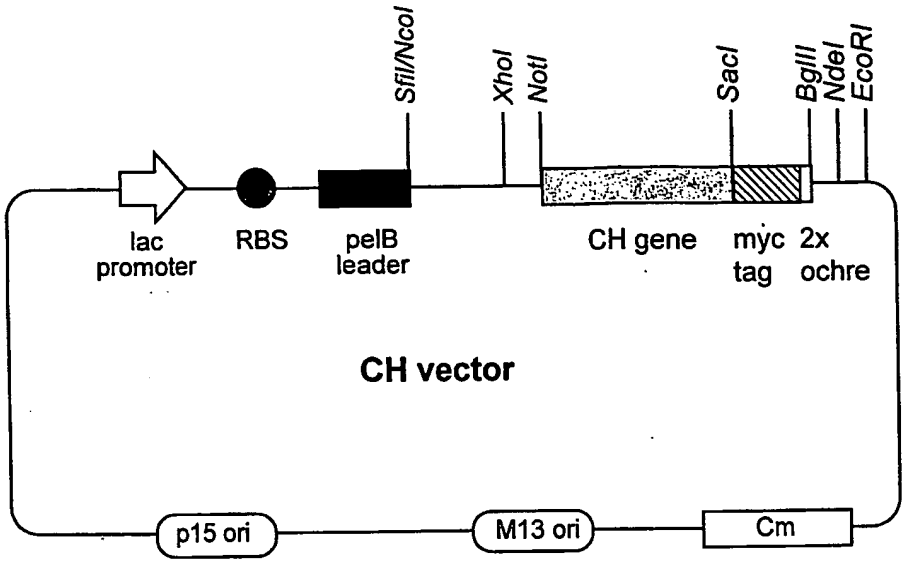

SfiI/NcoI
XhoI
NotI
SacI
BglII
NdeI
EcoRI
lac promoter
RBS
pelB leader
CH gene
myc tag
2x ochre
CH vector
p15 ori
M13 ori
Cm

Figure 8

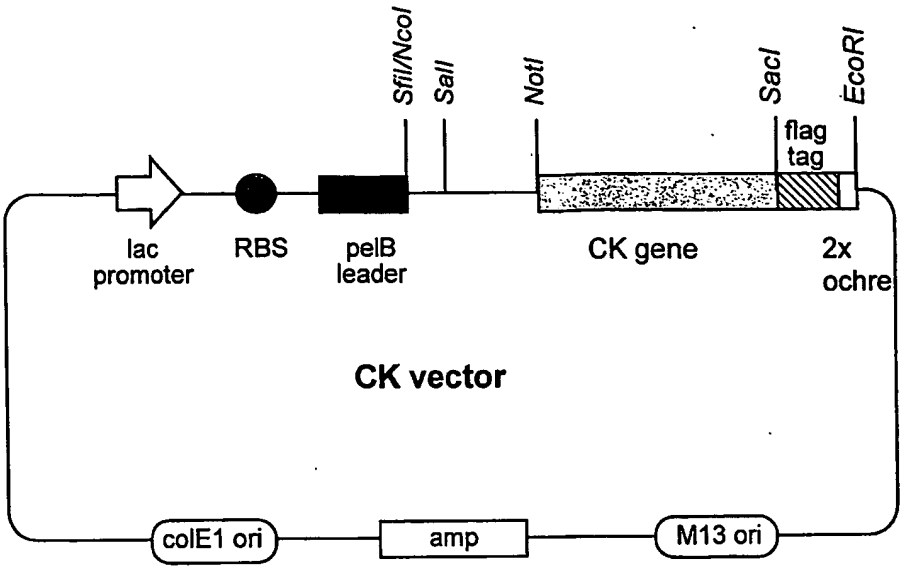

SfiI/NcoI
SalI
NotI
SacI
EcoRI
flag tag
lac promoter
RBS
pelB leader
CK gene
2x ochre
CK vector
colE1 ori
amp
M13 ori

Figure 9